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CYPRUS  
PROBLEM

*and the*

INTERNATIONALIST

TASKS

*of the*

GREEK CYPRIOT  
WORKING  
CLASS

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Alberto Florentin  
Dinos Ayiomamitis

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PROBLEM and the  
**INTERNATIONALIST**  
TASKS of the  
GREEK CYPRIOT  
WORKING  
CLASS

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## Foreword to the second edition

*IT IS THIRTY YEARS* since this pamphlet first appeared. A lot has changed since, at times dramatically: the Turkish Cypriot rising of 2003/04 against the Denktaş regime brought about the opening of checkpoints, previously separating physically the two communities. Then followed the contradictory verdicts by the two communities on the Annan Plan. The first government of the Left in the Republic of Cyprus (2008-2013) received from the deeply entrenched Greek Cypriot establishment that very special treatment reserved for communists in office. The crash of the Greek Cypriot banking sector in 2013 precipitated an unprecedented attack by the vicious neoliberal upstarts of the south. Wages and conditions were slashed, while the volume of toxic rhetoric against the Turkish Cypriots and “third country” refugees intensified. This paved the way for the neo-Nazis to gain representation in parliament in 2016.

Following the collapse of the Eastern Block and the ensuing readjustment in international alliances, the Republic of Cyprus secured accession to the European Union. Its collusion with United States interests in the region was enhanced by its undertaking to act as a “front-line state” in the scramble for energy sources and corridors in the Eastern Mediterranean. Having initiated a series of trilateral and bilateral agreements with some of the most abhorrent regimes on the map—with Netanyahu’s Israel, El-Sisi’s Egypt and Salman’s Saudi Arabia—, the RoC now seeks to see its specific interests integrated to the overall geostrategic perspective of the United States. This, at the expense of the RoC’s erstwhile friend, Russia, which pursues its own distinct objectives for a pipeline passage to north-eastern Europe via Turkey. Turkey, in turn, has its own energy aspirations, which are on collision course with those of the Israel-Egypt-Cyprus-Greece axis.

Remarkably, in all essentials the nature of the Cyprus problem has remained unaltered throughout the six decades since the short-lived

negotiated agreement of 1959. It remains a many-sided scuffle for the specific interests of the small and large capitalist groups and the national capitalist elites involved.

Today this conflict is further accentuated by the discovery of hydrocarbons under the Mediterranean seabed. The capitalist content of the conflict emerges with greater clarity, for greater have become the interests at stake: threatening to embroil ordinary people anew in a devastating war, more ominous than those experienced in 1963/64, 1967 and 1974—into a generalised Greco-Turkish conflagration.

The rapprochement movement is slowly beginning to reevaluate its political content and purpose. Should it persist on the road of second-track diplomacy, of “citizen diplomacy”, cheering on the leaders at every turn of the negotiations? Or should it—in a period of heightened local and regional tensions—act as a legitimate guarantor of peace between the communities and of democracy within the communities?

Relaunching *The Cyprus Problem* at the present juncture is more than warranted. The pamphlets’ greatest strength stems not so much from its historical account—although, back in 1989, it brought to light some very uncomfortable truths for the Greek Cypriot establishment; nor from its multitargeted polemical tenor—a mark of the times in which it was written; but from its method of identifying the democratic and internationalist challenges confronting the Greek and Turkish Cypriot working class and how peace and class unity are to be pursued.

Finally, when the book was first published its authors remained anonymous. It should now be recorded that this is the work of Alberto Florentin and Dinos Ayiomamitis, from which I selected and translated the pages that follow.

Daphnos Economou

Nicosia, October 2019



## Foreword to the first edition

*THIS PAMPHLET FORMS* only a small part of a 418-page-long book that was written and published by members of the Workers' Democracy group in southern Cyprus.

The present translation consists of the book's *Introduction* and its theoretical section which is headed *The Internationalist Alternative*. Short of translating the whole book, this selection was made on the basis that the *Introduction* here serves as an outline of the issues tackled throughout the book, while its theoretical part, which reasserts the internationalist traditions of the workers revolutionary movement, provides the arguments underlying the entire analysis of *The Cyprus Problem*.

Two points need to be made which are stressed in the book as a whole, but not so much in the sections that make up this pamphlet.

The *first* is that the conflict in Cyprus acquires its true significance and becomes intelligible only when viewed as part of the broader dispute between Greece and Turkey. The imperialist rivalry between these two states for local domination finds its most acute expression in Cyprus.

It should not be thought, however, that the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot ruling classes are subservient to their respective allies. The Greek Cypriot government in particular has proved quite capable in the past of embarking on policies that threaten to plunge Greece and Turkey into an all-out military confrontation.

The *second* point that needs to be made concerns the Communist Party of Cyprus. AKEL is a major force in Greek Cypriot politics. It prides itself as the largest non-ruling Communist Party in the world and regularly obtains some 30 per cent of the popular vote. Non-ruling though it may be, it has successfully assumed the role of kingmaker in Greek Cypriot politics for over a decade. It is also a party which enjoys the support of the working class and has a very substantial influence over the class.

*The Cyprus Problem*

It is hoped that this pamphlet will help to relate our ideas to and establish contact with Turkish Cypriot and Turkish revolutionaries, as well as contribute to the general discussion on the national question.

Daphnos Economou

London, July 1989

## Author's Preface to the third Greek (electronic) edition

*THE BOOK WAS RELEASED* in February 1988 by the Greek Cypriot group “Workers’ Democracy”. Its authors, who then chose to remain anonymous, are Alberto Florentin who signs this preface, and Dinos Ayiomamitis.

How do I see the book 30 years on? In my view, not necessarily shared by my co-author:

Its heavy title and heavy going style have of course to do with the fact that at the time we were 30 years younger and did not know better. But a further contributing factor was that when we started writing in 1986, we couldn’t have foreseen that in less than half a decade sea changes would occur: the breakup of the USSR, the collapse of “Existing Socialism” and of its preeminence on the international Left.

Therefore, when we were writing the book, the priorities of the Left masses in the Republic of Cyprus and around the globe were quite different from today’s. The struggle against the Right, against capitalism, imperialism and for socialism took place under the dreadful shadow of the Cold War between the “two social systems”: Western Capitalism and “Existing Socialism”. A conflict that meant the long-drawn persecution of the left in many countries, a heavy—to say the least—political climate in the countries of “Existing Socialism”, and the threat of nuclear Armageddon for human civilization and humanity itself. This was reflected not only in the content but also in the form and “style” of left-wing texts of the time, especially in countries where an intense persecution of the Left was or had been until recently underway, as was the case in Cyprus, Greece and Turkey.

But in the book there is also a strong critique of AKEL, less comradely and more hostile than I would have wished with the benefit hindsight.

Things have since changed drastically. AKEL combined at the time patriotic anti-imperialism with an internationalism that seemed, at least to us,

defined by its subordination to the geopolitical priorities of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.

This kind of internationalism, which identified with the geopolitical interests of Existing Socialism, was not at all a feature peculiar to AKEL. The USSR (or, for others, the People's Republic of China) was regarded by the huge majority on the Left throughout the capitalist world as the protagonist in the struggle for world socialism. The support of the Eastern Bloc appeared as the most important undertaking of the Left in the Western world.

It may be that I disagreed with this outlook then, and continue to do so now. But I believe the most damaging naivety a socialist can suffer from, is to consider such matters as simple and straight forward: that AKEL and the historic movement it represents can without second thought be pronounced guilty for supporting, as revealed in 1989-90, an oppressive political bureaucracy that tarnished the name of socialism.

On the contrary, by far the biggest responsibility lies with the imperialist bourgeoisie, which succeeded in punishing horribly workers' power in Soviet Russia, and its supporters throughout the world. The events of the 1990s were the culmination of a (not *the*) victory of Western capitalism in the class war the world over.

Nevertheless, this understandable, excusable, from a point onwards perhaps even unavoidable, yet incorrect support for Existing Socialism, and the erosion of AKEL resulting from the sorry state to which western imperialist torment had reduced "existing" socialism (socialist only in name from a point onwards), had also its side effects. AKEL did not oppose as much as we thought it should the reactionary, aggressive nationalism of the Greek Cypriot ruling class. Why? Because then the Republic of Cyprus was a member of the "non-aligned states" and it was to its benefit to flirt with the Eastern Bloc.

What did the book seek to achieve? As its title suggests, to convince Greek Cypriot workers (today I would say every informed Greek Cypriot democrat) that before them they have a specific internationalist (today I would say

simply democratic) task: to expose and denounce the age-long aggressive policy of big Greek Cypriot capital and its political representatives. Furthermore, that we should let the Turkish Cypriots and Turkish democrats denounce the corresponding sins of Turkish Cypriot and Turkish bourgeois nationalism. We saw this as the road most beneficial for the working class, for peace, rapprochement and the unity of the workers of the two communities.

This outlook today is understood by many, it has become a common place that guides the practice not only of the overwhelmingly AKEL-inspired movement of the Left—which exhibits the most consistent, honest and energetic practice in bringing the two communities closer—but even by many right-wing supporters of peace and rapprochement.

Things were very different at the time the book was first published. Apart from us, I remember that a similar view was held only by another small group in Limassol, which published the magazine *To Treno* [The Train], and a few high-profile members of AKEL, of whom most noteworthy was Andreas Ziartides, the General Secretary of the trade union PEO.

How much stick we got from the many who asked, and who moreover felt almost overwhelmed by the feeling of being patently in the right: “Why, *why* don’t you mention the innumerable outrages committed by the Turks?” A lot of stick! So much so, that we were obliged to use Lenin’s rather offensively simple (or perhaps patient) argument when responding to comparable demands:

To reach goal a we must

$$(c) \rightarrow a \leftarrow (b)$$

travel to the left from point (b) and to the right from point (c)... Meaning that some will approach in one way, others in another way the same goal (the merger of nations) from different starting-points.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, translated from the fourth Russian edition (henceforth referred to as *Works*), Vol. 23, p. 19

Today, this is understood even by many anti-nationalists and reapprochement supporters on the Right, a notable group of intellectuals who are either members or on the fringes of the local European Peoples Party, DISY.

The difference between the book's approach and theirs is that the book elucidates the responsibilities and aggression of the Greek Cypriot ruling class. It accuses that class for having contrived and perpetuated the myth of "the innocent victim" for the Greek Cypriot side. As opposed, the present day right-wing liberal approach ascribes responsibility to specific Greek Cypriot policies, to specific personalities, organizations, political parties and sometimes even to the entire Greek Cypriot community. Yet responsibility emanates and ultimately rests with the ruling class itself, the capitalists. The distinction is most significant.

Finally, the period and the audience we wished to address then were Greek Cypriots on the Left, the vast majority of whom were members or supporters of AKEL, Marx and Lenin enthusiasts. This enabled us—or perhaps more accurately—demanded of us to lean heavily the writings of Marx and Lenin.

Things have changed since. As most people on the Left nowadays, I no longer fill my writings with excerpts from Lenin and Marx. But I still consider their work a most solid foundation for consistent internationalist, or even just democratic anti-nationalist politics, and for understanding the problems that have been exacerbated to the point of threatening civilisation on a global scale.

Alberto Florentin  
Nicosia, May 2017

## Introduction

*THE PRESENT ESSAY*, as its title suggests, aims to contribute to the development of an internationalist current within the Greek Cypriot (and, to a degree, the Greek) working class. It aims also to help clarify this class' specific and immediate tasks, as determined by the historical period and by their position as Greek Cypriots.

The dominant political outlook on the Greek Cypriot Left is that of left-patriotism, known otherwise as social-patriotism or social-nationalism; the tendency, that is to say, to sound socialist but, in practice, view politics through the interests of the nation to which one belongs. The organisations that express this dominant policy are, first and foremost, the Greek Cypriot communist party AKEL, the socialist party EDEK and the organisation "Left Wing of EDEK". Within this social-patriotic spectrum, EDEK exemplifies the most right-wing form of left-patriotism, one of such intensity that it can hardly be described as "Left". AKEL represents the dominant and most characteristic form of Left-patriotism, while the "Left Wing of EDEK" exemplifies its most left-wing account.

The discord amongst Left-patriots, however substantial it may appear, is of an "internal" nature. Overall, their views stem from the same source and are located within the same camp. This is clearly demonstrated by their convergence on the "need to liberate Cyprus".

The established policy of the "traditional" Left, of AKEL, describes the issue of Cyprus as a problem of "invasion, occupation and partition of the island", and regards the problem as one created by US-NATO imperialism. AKEL describes a section of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie as "traitors and lackeys of imperialism", while another as "patriotic and progressive".

Consequently, AKEL construes that the Greek Cypriot working class should ally itself with the patriotic bourgeoisie in order to solve the Cyprus problem, i.e. to expel the Turkish army and achieve the “reunification of Cyprus”. Only then should the struggle against the bourgeoisie in its entirety and for socialism commence.

The main critique of this position from within the social-patriotic spectrum comes from the “Left-Wing of EDEK”. They also initially characterised a section of the Greek Cypriot ruling class as “agents of imperialism”, but viewed the remainder as “incapable of solving the national question”. The “solution”, for them also, is to “reunify Cyprus” and expel the Turkish army. When this policy was expressed in more left-wing terms, it reached the contradictory position of combining arguments about the “incapability” of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie to pose any “resistance to imperialism” with the assertion that the Cyprus problem is the product of the conflicting interests of Greek and Turkish Cypriot capitalists and therefore cannot be “solved” under capitalism. Throughout, this reasoning is advanced in support of the “left” argument that the “solution” of the Cyprus problem is inseparable from the struggle for socialism, from the struggle against the bourgeoisie in its entirety.

As a result, when the “traditional” Left argues in terms of achieving the “liberation and reunification” of Cyprus by an alliance of workers and bourgeois patriots, its left opposition responds by arguing that these same objectives (of “liberation and reunification”) are to be accomplished exclusively by the working class—through socialism. Their quarrel is on how and by which class(es) the “solution to the national question” is to be secured, and never about whether there are actually such unresolved national problems for the Greek Cypriots in the first place.

At a theoretical level, this disagreement is presented by the “Left-Wing of EDEK” and other marginal groupings as a modern version of the old dispute between Trotsky’s, theory of permanent revolution and the stages theory of the Stalinist communist parties.



In brief, the Stalinists considered that the backward, semi-feudal, predominantly agricultural countries, and the nationally oppressed colonies of low capitalist development, needed to pass through a “stage” in which the working class had to form an alliance with the local bourgeoisie in order to bring about a bourgeois democratic revolution. This, in its turn, would lead to a democratic-capitalist society in which the forces of production would advance, thus strengthening the working class numerically and politically. Only then would the working class be in a position to embark on a struggle against its “own” ruling class and for socialism.

The theory of permanent revolution argued, in response, that in the twentieth century the bourgeoisie in these countries neither wished nor was in a position to lead national liberation struggles or bourgeois democratic movements, and that the working class alone, however weak and small, was in a position to lead this struggle with consistency and draw behind it all other oppressed classes and the peasantry in particular. By taking power the working class would proceed to the construction of socialism, while at the same time undertaking “bourgeois-democratic” tasks (the solution of the agrarian question, i.e. the distribution of land to the peasants, national liberation and democracy). The main thrust of this theory was that the bourgeoisie is incapable of carrying through the struggle for national liberation and democracy and that this struggle could not be separated from the struggle for socialism.

This argument is now used by the “Left-Wing of EDEK” in an attempt to criticize AKEL for its alliance with the bourgeoisie on account of the “national problem”.

Both the stages theory and the theory of permanent revolution refer to countries with unresolved problems of bourgeois-democracy (parliament, democratic freedoms, agrarian question) that are often linked with problems of colonialism and national oppression. The theoretical background, therefore, on which the whole debate is unfolding, shows not only AKEL, but

also the “supporters” of the theory of permanent revolution to maintain that there are unresolved issues of national liberation for the Greek Cypriots.

This point of agreement is by far more important than their differences. The whole notion of national liberation is so prevalent in the entire social-patriotic spectrum in southern Cyprus, it is so deeply rooted, so “self-evident” and so undisputed, that no one sees the need to justify it. On the contrary, their entire thinking, their discussions and disagreements begin from beyond this point. Their obsession is on how to prevent the partitioning of Cyprus and how to get rid of the Turkish army; the accomplishment, in other words, of all the traditional Greek Cypriot national pursuits.

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*PATRIOTISM, HOWEVER, IS NOT* the only option available to the Greek Cypriot Left. There is an internationalist tradition that leads to a fundamentally different outlook on the Cyprus problem. The major problem that the working class has to confront is not the avoidance of partition and the expulsion of the Turkish troops from northern Cyprus, nor the dilemma of whether the bourgeoisie is (partly or wholly) treacherous, an imperialist puppet, or “incapable” of solving the Cyprus problem.

The alternative is the tradition of the internationalist workers’ movement that was moulded in a period of crisis and splits within the workers’ movement, at the outbreak of the First World War. This tradition is quite unknown in Cyprus, although by no means recent, and the writings of Lenin—the most prominent of its representatives—are widely available and their authority undisputed even by those who ultimately do not adhere to this tradition.

Workers’ internationalism was quashed as a mass political tradition with the defeat of the Russian revolution, the destruction of the workers’ soviets in Russia and the victory of Stalinism throughout the world communist

movement. It has slowly and painfully re-emerged with the growth of the revolutionary Left since 1968—the year of the “French May”.

Using the theoretical tools of this revolutionary tradition, we attempt here to develop an internationalist perspective for the Greek and the Greek Cypriot working classes and for this reason that we devote a large part of this essay to presenting the main tenets of this tradition.

\* \* \*

*THE PRESENT WORK* is divided into four parts: the first concentrates on an historical analysis that is predominantly concerned with the bellicose policies of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie. The second, theoretical part is dedicated to Lenin’s politics on the national question. The third part deals with the concrete internationalist policies on the Cyprus problem and finally, the fourth expands on today’s perspectives.

The view of the Cyprus problem that is widely held by Greek Cypriots is founded on deep-seated prejudices and received wisdom. These have to be brought to the fore, their true content critically examined and the myths that pervade them debunked.

The myth that the Greek Cypriots were the “innocent victims” of the 1974 war, the myth that if foreign powers had not been involved all would have been fine between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, is a nut that has to be cracked. There is also the attempt to diminish the extent, the significance and the causes of the economic disparity between the two communities and to underestimate the scope and intensity of intercommunal hostilities.

Facts not only indicate that the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie is anything but “innocent”, but that it nationally oppressed the Turkish Cypriots up until 1974. It is clear that the policy of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie was a concerted endeavour to impose and consolidate its economic and political superiority over the Turkish Cypriots. These aspirations have essentially

remained unaltered since their military defeat in 1974. What *has* changed are the tactics employed in the new post-1974 conditions.

We do not explain the responsibility of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie merely on a theoretical level, but also by referring to specific historical events. We present examples which are sufficient to evoke the attention of those with a relatively high level of class consciousness and unequivocal hatred for their own exploiters.

That we mainly examine the responsibilities of the Greek Cypriot (and to a lesser extent of the Greek) ruling class, does not imply that we ignore the responsibilities and the aggression of the Turkish Cypriot and Turkish bourgeoisies. Furthermore, in no sense do we deny the “divide and rule” policy of the British, employed during the last years of colonial domination. Equally, we do not deny the involvement of other Great Powers in the Cyprus dispute.

We do, however, consider that our primary duty as Greek Cypriot revolutionaries is to expose the aggression and responsibilities of our “own” ruling class. We therefore do not deal with conspiracy theories and sensationalist literature on the role of the CIA, the Pentagon etc., that has always been fashionable on the Greek Cypriot Left; an approach that has been providing with a left cover all those local interests (and persons) that are decidedly responsible.

Nationalism can be overcome only by combating the *particular illusions* of each working class. It is therefore imperative that Greek Cypriot workers realise the responsibility of our “own” ruling class for the disasters of the past, and the destructive nature of its future plans. Whatever the involvement of foreign powers, decisive responsibility does not lie with them.

The Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie still entertains the same interests and aspirations that in the past led to violent confrontations. We must therefore expose the hypocrisy of their pronouncements that they wish to arrive at a “permanent, peaceful and just solution” to the Cyprus problem. The Greek Cypriot ruling class ventures at present to spread its domination over the

whole island once again. It is this reactionary objective that has for long been termed “our national problem”.

The patriotic left falls in line with the ruling class when it insists that the essence of the problem is to topple the present “de facto conditions”, to forestall partition and secure the withdrawal of the Turkish army.

The portrayal of the Cyprus problem as the political achievement of “foreign imperialist partitionist designs” results—whether the Left is aware of it or not—in aiding the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie to conceal its own responsibilities; to claim that the *main* culprit is located somewhere without southern Cyprus. In addition, it allows the Greek Cypriot ruling class to pose as a victim, and, indeed, a section of it as “anti-imperialist”. The 1974 war was another violent phase in the long standing dispute between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot bourgeoisies: a dispute in which the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie had the upper hand up until 1974—being the chief aggressor through its various phases, whether “peaceful” or violent.

The Turkish Cypriots were an oppressed minority long before 1974. The whole of the Greek Cypriot ruling class was not the “innocent victim” in 1974, because up until then it was the main aggressor and oppressor. The fact that the Greek Cypriot ruling class lost the latest war does not absolve it in any way from blame.

This dispute has its roots in economic reality. Nationalism in both communities is neither a strange intellectual perversion nor the result of a bourgeois conspiracy for the manipulation of the working class; nor is it an imperialist conspiracy to divide the Cypriot people. Rather, it is based on conflicting economic interests.

For historical reasons the Cypriot bourgeoisie from its inception was divided between Greeks and Turks. However strange it may appear, in this split the advantage was on the side of the Greeks ever since the days of Ottoman rule. This reality was later to develop into intercommunal clashes, whipping up nationalism amongst the oppressed layers of the two communities.

Economic disparity was a more determining factor than the fact that the Turkish Cypriots formed a minority, which created an additional problem of national oppression, over and above the oppression of all Cypriots by the British until 1960.

The “national” problem in Cyprus, the problem of national oppression by a dominant nationality within the same state, was resolved for the Cypriot population as a whole with the British withdrawal in 1960 and for the Turkish Cypriots in 1974. Since 1960, the Greek Cypriots have not experienced national oppression of any kind, while they have themselves become oppressors of the Turkish Cypriots.

The Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie became independent shortly after 1960, in spite of the complications it faced from 1974 onwards. Since 1964 the development of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie allowed it to take control of the “neo-colonial” state inaugurated by the Zurich and London Agreements, and transform it into an independent centre of capitalist accumulation under Greek Cypriot control: a base for economic expansion into neighbouring “underdeveloped” regions. Thus the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie was able to undercut the “restrictions” posed by the Turkish Cypriots and the Zurich and London Agreements, while avoiding the control of both Turkey and Greece.

Therefore, there is no national liberation struggle for the Greek Cypriots. If the theory of permanent revolution was the revolutionary policy and the stages theory the reactionary one in the clash between Trotsky and the Stalinists, in southern Cyprus today the critique of the stages theory with the slogans and phraseology of the theory of permanent revolution (the bourgeoisie is incapable and only the working class is in a position to carry out successfully a national liberation struggle) not only bears no relation to the actual theory of permanent revolution, but is myopic, for it finds itself in agreement with its opponent, that the Greek Cypriot working class has to carry out some form of national liberation struggle today.

The real “Cyprus” problem for the Greek Cypriot working class does not constitute a national problem in any way. All the tragedies that resulted from

the wars so far, together with the threat of more to come, have contributed to what is the real problem: that the working classes of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus confront each other as enemies, which leads to the strengthening of class collaborationist policies with “their own” respective ruling classes in order to “confront the common external enemy”.

Although the Cyprus problem is not one of national liberation for the Greek Cypriots, it certainly arises from a national dispute. It is in relation to these kinds of problems that proletarian internationalism acquires immediate and real meaning. Solidarity with other workers and oppressed peoples in distant countries is token internationalism, whereas:

Internationalism means breaking with *one's own* social-chauvinists (i.e., defence advocates) and *with one's own* imperialist government; it means waging a revolutionary struggle against that government and overthrowing it, and being ready to make the greatest national sacrifices (even down to a Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty), if it should benefit the development of the *world* workers' revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Nowadays, imperialist are not only the great powers but also a number of smaller capitalist powers that have long ago ceased to exist as oppressed colonies or semi-feudal states, becoming fully integrated to the imperialist system. Such imperialist ruling classes are not only the Turkish and Greek ruling classes but also the small Greek Cypriot ruling class. Therefore, the Greek Cypriot working class has its “own” imperialist government and it is against this government that it has to direct its anti-imperialist struggle.

The Cyprus conflict and the wars that arise from it are unjust in every respect. It is a reactionary conflict between “medium” and “small” imperialists; all ruling classes involved have reactionary and expansionist intentions and pursuits.

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 28, p. 111

In such a dispute revolutionaries should not take sides, they should not support their “own” country. In an unjust war or faced with the threat of such a war, revolutionaries cannot stand for the defence of their fatherland, whatever form this war might take. This is the primary internationalist task of the Greek Cypriot working class.

There is a further problem that stems from this national conflict. It is the denial and obstruction of the right of the Turkish Cypriots to self-determination by our “own” ruling class.

The recognition of the right of the Turkish Cypriots to self-determination is not premised on how the current situation in Cyprus presents itself, on today’s geographic division, the new borders and the so-called “accomplishments of invasion and force”. The borders before the 1974 war and the enclaves which the Turkish Cypriots were forced into, were also the “product of force”, exerted by the Greek Cypriots. What is more, the borders of most modern states and often the geographic distribution of their population is also the product of force.

\* \* \*

*DURING THE FIRST TWO* and a half decades of this [the 20th] century—years in which the dispute between revolutionaries and social-patriots was at its peak—the stance of internationalists was determined by considerations of international class solidarity and the democratic education of workers—certainly not by the national rights and privileges of their “own” nation.

The most crucial element in Lenin’s politics on the national question is the necessity to distinguish between the tasks of the working class of the oppressor nation and those of the working class of the oppressed nation.

The distortion of Leninism which presents Lenin as a supporter of patriotism, of “national self-determination” and of “national independence”, is founded on ignoring Lenin’s argument that the internationalist duties of the working class differ according to nationality. The working class of the



oppressor nation must struggle for the right of the oppressed nation to self-determination, while the revolutionaries of the oppressed nation must primarily stress the need for unity between the two working classes, demonstrate their indifference to their “own” national rights, and point to the potential of remaining within the same state.

In relation to the Cyprus problem the Greek Cypriot working class has a series of specific tasks which necessarily differ from those of the Turkish Cypriot working class. These tasks arise from the duty of the Greek Cypriot working class to support the right of the Turkish Cypriots to self-determination, i.e. their right to form a separate state if they so wish.

We argue in terms of support for their *right*, for we do not maintain that they absolutely *must* have their own state, (something claimed by the Turkish Cypriot bourgeoisie). Nor do we assert that it would be “preferable” if they did. We simply say that, as Greek Cypriots our duty is to fight against our “own” ruling class which denies this right to the Turkish Cypriots.

The specific internationalist tasks and the struggles of the Greek Cypriot working class coincide to a large extent with those of the Greek, due to the alliance and common objectives of their ruling classes. The same applies respectively for the Turkish Cypriot and Turkish working classes. The internationalist alliance and class unity of all four working classes demands that its two national sections move in concert, that Greek Cypriot and Greek workers wage joint struggles against “their” ruling classes and their alliance. Correspondingly, it requires common struggles by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot workers against their “own” ruling classes and their alliance.

There are also duties common to both (or all four) working classes: for example, the attitude of neutrality towards all bourgeois solutions, the refusal to take sides in this dispute by upholding the privileges of their “own” nation, the duty to be “indifferent” as to whether Cyprus will be reunited or remain as two separate states. It does not follow, however, that they should also be “indifferent” to the efforts of their “own” ruling class to forcefully impose its favoured solutions.

At any rate, it is important for revolutionaries to *refuse* to support this or that “practical” solution of the problem under capitalism, or simply propose its solution in the unspecified future, under socialism. They must identify which political practice will *today* promote the interests of the international working class and of socialism in Cyprus. For this reason, we attempt to show the *practical* significance of refusing to defend “our” bourgeois fatherland, of supporting the right of the Turkish Cypriots to self-determination; the significance of neutrality as to what the solution of the Cyprus problem might be under capitalism. A neutrality, however, that does not remain “indifferent” towards the attempts of “our” ruling class to impose solutions that are to its benefit.

The patriotic left is unable to discern the concrete tasks that stem from the above, for it refuses to see and recognise the imperialist character of the Greek and Greek Cypriot ruling classes. Thus, it resorts to *abstract* “internationalist” propaganda or to policies with a socialist flavour but of no socialist substance. For example, AKEL describes the aggression of the Greek Cypriot ruling class as “past mistakes”, while the “Left-Wing of EDEK”, which argues that “the Cyprus problem cannot be solved under capitalism”, pointlessly promises “to recognise the right of the Turkish Cypriots to self-determination in a socialist Cyprus”.

The phenomenon of social-patriotism finds explanation in the fact that in non-revolutionary periods the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. Succumbing to patriotism is viewed as a temporary concession to avoid political isolation. At the expense of the long term interests of the working class, opportunism, as a constituent of social-patriotism, grasps every opportunity to advance the narrow and ephemeral interests of a section of the class, as is the case with national interests. The Greek Cypriot working class, being a member-class of the dominant nationality, enjoyed minimal but tangible privileges, thus contributing to the development of patriotism even among those workers who could otherwise recognise the class divisions in society. Another factor favouring social-patriotism is the role of the petty-

bourgeois who traditionally form the most patriotic section of the population. A large number of them are hostile to big capital and wish to present themselves as socialists, allies and supporters of the working class. Finally, AKEL, which plays the main role in shaping left-wing consciousness, is a rather unusual communist party. While organically linked with the class conscious and organised working class, it is tied up with the interests of Greek Cypriot ruling class—not only through its privileged bureaucracy but as a major employer in its own right.

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*DESPITE THE PREVALENCE* of patriotism on the Left, there still exists the prospect and potential for the emergence of an internationalist revolutionary current in southern Cyprus. We do not claim that this can be attained easily, but nor is it impossible. It is crucial that such a current does arise.

One of the consequences of the 1974 war—beyond the control of the bourgeoisie—was that it dealt a first major blow to Greek Cypriot nationalism. The Greek Cypriots ceased being the dominant nationality and their “national pride” received a hard blow. This gave rise to the much discussed new generation that is “indifferent” not only to “our national problem” but also, seemingly, to politics in general. In reality, however, what this generation is indifferent to is the only available brand of politics, which has at its centre the “national question” and the efforts to resolve it to the benefit of the Greek Cypriots.

For a part of the youth and especially for young workers to move from their indifference, to class conscious internationalism, there is need for a revival in class struggle. For those revolutionaries who want to contribute to the development of an internationalist current, instead of adjusting to the present day nationalist prejudices and illusions of the class, an orientation towards class struggle is necessary along with the conviction that the working class does change in the process of struggle.

No matter how small is today's potential for the development of an internationalist workers movement in southern Cyprus, the fight for the establishment and strengthening of an internationalist tendency within it is the only course available for the internationalist and democratic education of the Greek Cypriot working class and for the solidarity and unity of the working classes of Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. This is a condition for the advancement of working class combativity, in contribution to the struggle for workers' power and international socialism.

The aims of the present essay have determined its structure and the issues on which it focuses. Our intention was neither to write a historical essay, nor an "objective" study from a "detached" point of view. We intended a political essay that is based on the general perspective of the interests of the international working class and on our specific position as revolutionaries in southern Cyprus.

For this reason, the main thrust of our argument is a polemic against the policies and practices of the Greek Cypriot ruling class. It takes the form of an exposition and denunciation. We concentrate on demonstrating that the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie is not an innocent victim but itself an aggressor.

However, the effort of unmasking the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie is not in itself sufficient to define a precise internationalist policy.

A comprehensive formulation of such a policy can only be developed by challenging the prevailing ideas and practices of the Greek Cypriot Left. Consequently, our challenge to the prevailing ideology on the Left not only aims to show where it is badly mistaken, but is also the necessary vehicle for expounding our politics, demonstrating that any likeness between our politics and theirs is superficial and in periods of crises lead to two distinct courses of action.

In this essay we challenge the organised political parties of the Left, and primarily AKEL, which presents itself and is indeed regarded by class conscious workers as the party of the class.

Other than AKEL, there is a much smaller organization, the “Left-Wing of EDEK”, a sister organization of the Militant tendency in Britain. Although there can be no comparison between AKEL and “Left-Wing of EDEK” in size and influence, in our analysis we place near equal emphasis on their views. This requires an explanation. If AKEL expresses the dominant politics on the Left, the politics of the “Left-Wing of EDEK”, as far as the Cyprus problem is concerned, represents the far left of this prevalent political outlook.

Finally, we do not particularly concern ourselves with the socialist party EDEK, except where we deal with the fallacy that EDEK is in any sense a workers’ party. The claim that it is, is one that stands in contradiction with the policies of EDEK and contrasts with the fundamentally petty-bourgeois composition of its membership and following. Its lack of any organic links with the working class, and the fact that only a small number of workers support it are sufficient evidence to destroy the image that EDEK at times tries to project. The nature of its politics is readily recognisable by those with an internationalist intention, or even those with an intention to pose as internationalists.

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*SINCE WE ARE NOT* particularly concerned with presenting a study of the history of Cyprus and of the evolution and development of the Cypriot bourgeoisie, we concentrate on showing how the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie is not as “innocent” as they would have us believe, and on exposing its own aggression. The presentation of events is fragmentary and does not follow a chronological order.

This is partly due to our wish to keep the length and complexity of the text within limits. We are also working people and not professional revolutionaries or historians and because of our limited resources and the

inevitable time constraints, it would have been difficult to undertake a more comprehensive historical research.

It is also important to note that another obstacle in our research was that the most significant events in our analysis are precisely those that all (the state, the political parties, the Greek and Greek Cypriot intellectuals) are trying to cover up, play down and distort. It has been said that truth is the first casualty in war. Cyprus has been in a perpetual state of war since 1955. For this reason, unless one has a precise idea of what to look for and of what may have been repressed, one stands little chance of “bumping into” these most telling facts. No contemporary work on Cyprus, to our knowledge, is completely trustworthy. The most valuable sources are old newspapers and journals, where, of course, distortion is always present, but more limited. It must be said that the use of such sources is arduous and time-consuming.

Given the above constraints, our main effort was directed to discovering and analysing the role and responsibilities of the Greek Cypriot ruling class in the Cyprus problem, to the extent that this was necessary to lay the foundations of an internationalist revolutionary policy for the Greek Cypriot Left. Further and more elaborate research is undoubtedly required. Whether this will be carried out and by whom depends on the course of the class struggle in southern Cyprus and in Greece. It is only the class struggle which can provide the stimulus that will generate the real revolutionary intellectuals.

## The Internationalist Alternative

*THE PRESENT WAR* in Cyprus did not begin in 1974 but much earlier. Ever since 1958, when Cyprus was still under colonial administration, there were large scale intercommunal clashes between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, with many casualties on both sides.

The Greek Cypriot ruling class was never the blameless victim of an invasion, but an aggressor itself. Up until 1974 the Turkish Cypriots were a minority nationally oppressed by the Greek Cypriots.

This aggression of the Greek Cypriot ruling class is not to be attributed to a series of “mistakes” but to its political and economic interests that are locked in an age-long conflict with those of the Turkish Cypriot ruling class. As long as these interests prevail, the aggression will continue.

After the 1974 war, the Greek Cypriot ruling class has striven to remain the sole recognised power on the island. It sought by all means at its disposal to prevent the declaration and legal recognition of a Turkish Cypriot state and tried to block all independent manifestations of the Turkish Cypriots internationally, economically, politically as well as culturally, in international athletics etc.

What immediate conclusions are to be drawn from the above?

For a start, the dominant political view that sees all Greek Cypriots as innocent victims of a grand conspiracy, of foreign intervention, local traitors and “exceptions”—ending by arguing for “national unity”—does not stand up to the historical test. Nor is there any truth in the hypothesis that if “foreign intervention” was somehow neutralised, “if we were left on our own”, the problem would lapse on its own accord.

The policy of class collaboration and of “national unity” for the sake of the “Cyprus Problem” not only leads the working class into a position supportive of the aggression and racism of its “own” bourgeoisie, but also fails to safeguard us against future wars and the national oppression of the Turkish Cypriots. For it does not combat one of the main parties responsible for this destruction: the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie.

All these are negative conclusions however: That the dominant political outlook leads the working class up a blind alley. But what could, indeed, what should replace this policy of class collaboration? What are the tasks and what should be the stance of the Greek Cypriot working class on all issues arising from the so-called Cyprus problem?

To give an answer, we will draw from the traditions of the workers’ movement and particularly from Lenin.

What we have to say could have been expressed in our own words or by resorting to the writings of other revolutionaries. Doing so would have perhaps made the whole exercise more readily understood. Lenin was writing for an audience of the turn of the century, referring to events and circumstances that are little known today. Why Lenin then?

It is not a question of idolatry, of a religious reference to the “holy scriptures” of the movement. An important factor that compelled us to resort to “authorities” are the specific conditions in southern Cyprus today.

There is a gulf separating our views from all other political outlooks in southern Cyprus; a gulf that distances us from the right, but also from the political consensus on the Left. Prevalent within the Greek Cypriot Left is ignorance of, and absolute mistrust in, the principles of internationalism—notwithstanding the ease and regularity with which all use the word “internationalism”, and castigate “nationalism”.

At the same time, the audience we wish to address has been nurtured to attribute to Lenin superhuman qualities. Us they could dismiss lightly as “oddballs”, but what about Lenin?



However, this is not the sole reason for our insistence on Lenin. Lenin, the Bolshevik Party and generally the workers' revolutionary movement at the turn of the century represent the most dynamic period of the workers' movement.

The working class in southern Cyprus, as everywhere else, must be reintroduced to this tradition which it must assimilate if it is to advance, both in its daily struggles to further its immediate interests, and in the struggle for international socialism; something tantamount nowadays days with the salvation of humanity from nuclear annihilation.

### **War is the Continuation of Politics**

The Cyprus problem is defined by all Left political tendencies in southern Cyprus as an issue of “anti-occupation, anti-imperialism and national-liberation”. In reality, however, the problem is not such at all. In the following pages we will deal with the components of this prevailing outlook, beginning with its “anti-occupation” constituent.

When speaking of the need to struggle *against occupation*—whether they state this explicitly, implicitly or even if they deny it—the proponents of this policy concentrate on the *results of the 1974 war*, “forgetting” what preceded this war and what has followed since. The only thing of concern for them is that at the present moment the Turkish army is winning, that there is a Turkish “occupation”. Lenin had a word or two for people thus preoccupied:

The philistine does not realise that war is “the continuation of policy”, and consequently limits himself to the formula that “the enemy has attacked us”, “the enemy has invaded my country”, without stopping to think what issues are at stake in the war, which classes are waging it, and with what political objects.

For the philistine the important thing is where the armies stand, who is winning at the moment. For the Marxist the important thing is what issues are at stake in this war, during which first one, then the other, army may be on top.<sup>1</sup>

Of which policy was the 1974 war a continuation? As far as the Greek Cypriots are concerned, they should not merely refer to the military events of 1963-64 and 1967, during which the Greek Cypriot army was advancing and despoiling, but should concentrate on the *entire* Greek Cypriot policy of social, political, economic and national oppression of the Turkish Cypriots. In other words, we should place under examination not only the reactionary interests of the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot bourgeoisie but also those of the Greek Cypriot and Greek bourgeoisie, both prior to 1974 and since.

If these interests are taken into account, then it emerges that the conflict in Cyprus—in all its phases, both hot and cold, of military confrontation and of truce, before and after 1974—has been and remains reactionary on *all* sides.

What should the stance of revolutionaries be towards this reactionary policy and the wars that it generates?

### **The Principal Positions on War**

Let us return to Lenin and the revolutionary traditions of the beginning of the [20th] century, to locate within the socialist movement three principal attitudes towards the First World War and see how these were dealt with by Lenin.

Firstly, there was the tendency that stood for the “defence of the fatherland”, known as “*defencism*”, which held that it was the responsibility of the working class and of socialists to defend their country for as long as the war would last. This was the dominant tendency within the socialist movement, the tendency of the right-wing social-patriots. Lenin fought

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 23, p. 33

against this policy and accused its supporters of hypocrisy and of deceiving the working class:

The Mensheviks deceived the people in a most despicable manner by calling this war a defensive or revolutionary war... the bourgeois democrats have always advanced all sorts of “slogans” to deceive the people. The point is to *test* their sincerity, to compare their words with their *deeds*, not to be satisfied with idealistic or charlatan *phrases*, but to get down to *class reality*.<sup>2</sup>

We shall not allow ourselves to be deceived, and let the bourgeois advisers explain the war as simply as that: people were living at peace, then one attacked, and the other is defending himself...

We all expected this imperialist war, and prepared for it. And if this is so, it is not at all important who attacked first; all were preparing for war, and the attacker was the one who thought it most advantageous to do so at the particular moment.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, there was the *pacifist* tendency, i.e. the propensity to argue generally and in the abstract in favour of peace and in opposition to war, but without committing oneself in the actual struggle against one’s “own” ruling class and against capitalism, the true cause of the war:

Socialists have always condemned wars between nations as barbarous and brutal. Our attitude towards war, however, is fundamentally different from that of bourgeois pacifists (supporters and advocates of peace)... We differ...in that we understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within a country.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 28, p. 282

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* Vol. 36, p. 301

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* Vol. 21, p. 299

Those who repeat the general, meaningless, non-committal, goody-goody desires of pacifism are not really working for a democratic peace. Only he is working for such a peace who exposes the imperialist nature of the present war and of the imperialist peace that is being prepared and calls upon the peoples to rise in revolt against their criminal governments.<sup>5</sup>

Pacifism in its many variations was the position most often adopted by the social-democrats of the “centre”, those who stood between the openly right-wing social-chauvinists and the revolutionary minority. Lenin considered them as an even greater threat than the social-patriots, for their veiled patriotism deceived the workers:

...we have always drawn a dividing line between the social-chauvinists and the “Centre. The former, in our opinion, have defected to the bourgeoisie. With regard to them we demand not merely struggle, but a split. The latter hesitate, vacillate, and their efforts to unite the socialist masses with the chauvinist leaders cause the greatest damage to the proletariat.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, revolutionary defeatism, the view that in a reactionary war the proletariat of all belligerent countries should “wish for the defeat of their ‘own’ bourgeoisie”. This was the policy supported by the Bolsheviks in Russia and the revolutionary wing of other social-democratic parties in Europe.

How strongly Lenin criticised any retreat from the slogan for the “defeat of one’s own government”, and how important he felt this position to be, can be seen in an article he wrote in July 1915, almost a year after the outbreak of the First World War. The article is titled *For the Defeat of One’s Own*

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<sup>5</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 23, p. 186

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* pp. 195-6

*Government in the Imperialist War*, and deserves to be read in whole. Here we can reproduce only a few passages from it:

During a reactionary war a revolutionary class cannot but desire the defeat of its government.

This is axiomatic, and disputed only by conscious partisans or helpless satellites of the social-chauvinists...

... A “revolutionary struggle against the war” is merely an empty and meaningless exclamation.., *unless* it means revolutionary action against *one’s own government* even in wartime...Wartime revolutionary action against one’s own government indubitably means, not only desiring its defeat, but really facilitating such a defeat. (“Discerning reader”: note that this does not mean “blowing up bridges”, organising unsuccessful strikes in the war industries, and in general helping the government to defeat the revolutionaries.)

The phrase-banding Trotsky<sup>7</sup> has completely lost his bearings on a simple issue. It seems to him that to desire Russia’s defeat *means* desiring the victory of Germany...To help people that are unable to think for themselves, the Berne resolution made it clear that in *all* imperialist countries the proletariat must now desire the defeat of its own government.

The reason why the chauvinists repudiate the defeat “slogan” is that *this slogan alone* implies a consistent call for revolutionary action against one’s own government in wartime. Without such action, millions of ultra-revolutionary phrases such as “war against the war and the conditions, etc.” are not worth a brass farthing.

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<sup>7</sup> Even though in the issues dealt with here, some of Lenin’s disagreements were with Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg, both of them were to find themselves in the same camp – the revolutionary camp – as Lenin, and are with Lenin the most outstanding revolutionaries of the period. Trotsky as a leader of the Russian revolution was considered second only to Lenin, while Luxemburg and her comrade Karl Liebknecht were characterised by Lenin in 1919 as the “finest representatives of the Third International”.

The opponents of the defeat slogan are simply afraid of themselves when they refuse to recognize the very obvious fact of the inseparable link between revolutionary agitation against the government and helping bring about its defeat.

To repudiate the defeat slogan means allowing one's revolutionary ardour to degenerate into an empty phrase or sheer hypocrisy.

What is the substitute proposed for the defeat slogan? It is that of "neither victory nor Defeat". This, however, is nothing but a paraphrase of the "*defence of the fatherland*" slogan...It means justifying the chauvinism of *all* the imperialist nations, whose bourgeoisie are always ready to say—and *do say to the people*—that they "only" struggle against "defeat"...

On closer examination, this slogan [of "neither victory nor defeat"] will be found to mean a "class truce", the renunciation of the class struggle by the oppressed classes in all belligerent countries, since the class struggle is impossible without dealing blows at one's "own" bourgeoisie, one's "own" government, whereas dealing a blow at one's own government in wartime *is* high treason, *means* contributing to the defeat of one's own country. Those who accept the "neither-victory-nor-defeat" slogan can only be hypocritically in favour of class struggle, of "disrupting the class truce"...The only policy of actual, not verbal disruption of the "class truce", of acceptance of the class struggle, is for the proletariat *to take advantage of the difficulties* experienced by its government and its bourgeoisie *in order to overthrow them*. This, however, cannot be achieved or *striven for*, without desiring the defeat of one's government and without contributing to that defeat.

...A proletarian *cannot* deal a class blow at his government or hold out (in fact) a hand to his brother, the proletarian of the "foreign" country which is at war with "our side", *without committing* "high treason", *without contributing* to the defeat...

... Hatred of one's own government and one's own bourgeoisie cannot be aroused unless their defeat is desired; one *cannot* be a sincere opponent of a civil

(i.e., class) truce without arousing the hatred of one's own government and bourgeoisie!

Those who stand for the “neither-victory-nor-defeat” slogan are in fact on the side of the bourgeoisie and the opportunists, for they do not believe in the possibility of international revolutionary action by the working class against their own governments, and *do not wish* to help develop such action, which, though undoubtedly difficult, is the only task worthy of a proletarian, the only socialist task.<sup>8</sup>

Lenin begins his article by stating as an “axiom” that in “a reactionary war a revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government”.

The war in Cyprus is reactionary, for it is waged on all sides with expansionist designs, and with the intent of national oppression; for it is the continuation of a policy of aggression. The only internationalist stance for the two Cypriot working classes (as well as those of Greece and Turkey) is to desire the “defeat of their ‘own’ governments”, in other words, *revolutionary defeatism*.

Often objections like the following are heard: “But is it possible to compare the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie with the German or Russian imperialists of the First World War? Nowadays everyone “knows” that it is the Turkish bourgeoisie which is imperialist, expansionist, etc”.

It should be clear to everyone not convinced by the hypocrisy of the slogan “Nicosia is independent from Athens” that the war in Cyprus is not conducted between Turkey and Cyprus alone, but with the involvement also of Greece as one of the main protagonists.

How else can we interpret the “inclusion of Cyprus in Greek military planning” and utterances of the type “if we lose Cyprus, then we’ve also lost the Aegean”? These are manifestations of how completely engrossed the

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<sup>8</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 270-80

Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie is in the imperialist antagonism between Turkey and Greece.

If viewing the conduct of the “small” Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie as being also imperialist is hard for some to stomach, then they should dwell a little on whether the Greco-Turkish war in Cyprus is or has ever been progressive *on the Greek and Greek Cypriot side*.

Before we move on to deal with the next supposed component of the Cyprus problem, i.e. the “struggle for national liberation”, we will attempt, by referring once more to Lenin, to provide a theoretical framework on the national question that will then enable us to view the issue from an internationalist perspective.

## LENIN ON “THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF- DETERMINATION” AND THE “DIFFERENT TASKS” OF REVOLUTIONARIES

### **Is Patriotism Compatible with Internationalism?**

There is the impression on the Cypriot Left, and more broadly among present day Communist Parties, that Lenin and the Bolsheviki were the most fervent supporters of national “self-determination”, of national independence, and of patriotism. Accordingly, AKEL bases its entire political ideology on “patriotism” (supposedly something different from nationalism), by calling for the “completion of Cypriot national independence”, by upholding respect for the traditions of the land, etc.:

AKEL, as the party of the working class, is *genuinely patriotic*, for it places the interests of the people above all else. As such, it is the vanguard in the struggle against imperialism, the Turkish occupation and for the liberation of Cyprus. *AKEL as a party that is genuinely patriotic...* struggles consistently against the



British and American bases that are stationed on Cypriot soil, and views their presence as irreconcilable with the whole notion of independence.<sup>9</sup>

This is a distortion of the politics of Lenin. Let us look more concretely at the views he held on the issue of nationalism:

Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the “most just”, “purest”, most refined and civilised brand. In place of all nationalism Marxism advances internationalism, the amalgamation of all nations in the higher unity, a unity that is growing before our eyes with every mile of railway line that is built, with every international trust, and every worker’s association that is formed (an association that is international in its economic activities as well as in its ideas and aims).

...capitalism’s world-historical tendency to break down national barriers, obliterate national distinctions and to *assimilate* nations—a tendency which manifests itself more and more powerfully with every passing decade, and is one of the greatest driving forces transforming capitalism into socialism.

No one unobsessed by nationalist prejudices can fail to perceive that this process of assimilation of nations by capitalism means the greatest historical progress, the breakdown of hidebound national conservatism in the various backwoods...<sup>10</sup>

So how can Lenin’s internationalism be reconciled with the patriotic policy of present day Communist Parties?

They assume that it is possible for them to be internationalists and patriots at one and the same time, as long as they define their “patriotism” as something different from “bourgeois nationalism” and “chauvinism”, to which they remain opposed:

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<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Central Committee of AKEL, 16th Party Conference*, Nov. 1986, p. 80-1

<sup>10</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 20, pp. 28-34

Internationalists have always provoked the hatred of reaction. Their onslaught is directed, in the first instance, against communists, whom they call an “anti-national force”, hostile to patriotism. There is no bigger lie than this. True internationalists are always true patriots. We struggle with consistency for the immediate interests of the nation, for the consolidation of its independence and its sovereignty.

Our patriotism is no mere words. It is a patriotism of action... Our patriotism has nothing in common with nationalism and is inseparable from proletarian solidarity.<sup>11</sup>

While there is a seeming contradiction between the terms “patriotism” and “internationalism...in reality these terms, viewed from their correct class angle and meaning, form a dialectical unity and are inseparably forged in a basic political and moral principle of the Communist Parties, and of communists in general.

A more careful analysis of the terms “patriotism and internationalism” will indicate that the internationalist element does not exclude the national...

... “I became a communist because I am a patriot” declared to the world the eminent scientist Frederic Joliot-Curie, as he joined the French Communist Party in the difficult moments of the uneven struggle against the Nazi *occupiers*...”<sup>12</sup>

However, in the age of capitalist supremacy and imperialist competition, Lenin ascribed one and the same meaning to the words “nationalism”, “chauvinism” and “patriotism”, and never characterised true socialists as *patriots*. On the contrary, he employed the term “social-patriot” or “social-

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<sup>11</sup> Rene Urbany (General Secretary of the C.P. of Luxemburg), “In Internationalism Lies the Power of Our Movement”, *World Political Review*, Cyprus ed., Dec. 1985, p. 5

<sup>12</sup> *Neos Demokratias* – theoretical journal of the C.C. of AKEL, No. 56, March 1979, pp. 17-18

chauvinist” to expose those who were “socialists in words but patriots in deeds”. He did not mince his words on the matter:

... the avowed social-patriots and the “Kautskyites” of all countries proved to be the worst traitors of the proletariat.<sup>13</sup>

For Lenin, the Bolsheviki and all the other revolutionary internationalist currents of the time, socialism and patriotism (or nationalism—there is no difference in substance) were not merely incompatible but hostile political outlooks. This point is made quite clear in the following passage (to which we will have occasion to return), where Lenin said of Polish internationalists:

[W]e have always regarded *only* these Polish Social-Democrats *as socialists*. *The others are patriots...*<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism and those colonies where the working class was more or less nonexistent, Lenin identified within modern bourgeois societies *two and only two* possible attitudes towards the question of nationalism:

Bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism—these are the two irreconcilably hostile slogans that correspond to the two great class camps throughout the capitalist world, and express the *two* policies (still more, the two world outlooks) on the national question.<sup>15</sup>

It is also worth noting that when Lenin refers in his writings to socialists or the working class of capitalist countries, he refers to their country by often

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<sup>13</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 31, p. 29

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* Vol. 24, p. 298

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* Vol. 20, p. 26

placing in ironic quotes the words their “own” fatherland or “their” fatherland, etc.

The communist parties today “overlook” Lenin, but also one of the most celebrated passages of the *Communist Manifesto*:

The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.

## **Two Distortions**

The route through which left-patriots “reconcile” *theoretically* their patriotism with the politics of Lenin and of the Third International is that of distortion; by presenting Lenin as the most fervent supporter of national independence, of national self-determination, and of the formation by every nation (or peoples...) of their own state; thus leading to the conclusion that Lenin perceived it as a task of communists to struggle for the national liberation and national independence of their own nation.

This distortion occurs through two basic practices:

First: by “omitting” one or two words and displaying an educated “indifference” towards their meaning. Lenin was not a supporter of “national self-determination” or a champion of “national independence”, but supported the “*right* of nations to self-determination”. He did not support “secession” (the separation of part of a state for the formation of another) but the *freedom* to secede. By omitting these crucial words—“right” and “freedom”—the whole content of the Bolshevik thesis is twisted into its opposite.

Second: They “forget” to mention that the duty to fight for the “right of nations to self-determination” etc. rests not with the revolutionaries of the *oppressed* nation but with the revolutionaries of the *oppressor* nation.

Let us examine more concretely the importance of the words “right” and “freedom”.

### **The *Right* to Self-Determination**

It was clear for Lenin that revolutionary socialists are opposed both to patriotism and to the fragmentation into many states:

The proletariat cannot support any consecration of nationalism; on the contrary, it supports everything that helps to obliterate national distinctions and remove national barriers; it supports everything that makes the ties between nationalities closer and closer, or tends to merge nations. To act differently means siding with reactionary philistinism.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, while supporting the “merging of nations”, Lenin emphasised the necessity for socialists to support the “right of nations to self-determination”, the “right to separate state existence”. He did not, however, support independence or “separate state existence” in themselves.

At first glance the difference between these two positions may seem unimportant. Lenin was misunderstood on this even by his contemporaries, both on the Left and on the Right, and was accused of encouraging separatism and nationalism, and of holding a contradictory position. His response is characteristic:

To accuse those who *support freedom* of self-determination, i.e., *freedom* to secede, of encouraging separatism, is as foolish and hypocritical as accusing those who advocate freedom of divorce of encouraging the destruction of family ties.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 20, p. 35

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p. 422

The real significance of the words “right” and “freedom” becomes apparent here. Consider the implications if, instead of speaking “in favour of the freedom to divorce”, one simply argued “in favour of divorce”!<sup>18</sup> This becomes even clearer when applied to the demand for the “right to abortion”. If we missed-out the word “right” then we would be actually “inciting to abortion”.

Therefore, on the one hand, it is neither the ambition nor the duty of revolutionaries to encourage the formation of new states and the fulfilment of national aspirations, or to discourage the merger of states:

The right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to secede and form independent national states will be dealt with elsewhere. *But while, and insofar as, different nations constitute a single state, Marxists will never, under any circumstances, advocate either the federal principle or decentralisation.* The great centralised state is a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disunity to the future socialist unity of the whole world...<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, however, internationalists are also consistent democrats. The “right of nations to self-determination” is nothing but just one other democratic right and as such it is, or should be, supported by revolutionaries for those that claim it:

The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation. Specifically, this *demand for political democracy* implies

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<sup>18</sup> We hope that neither Lenin nor we will be misinterpreted as being in support of the strengthening of family ties! The whole issue is here used only as an example to make the significance of the words “right” and “freedom” more apparent.

<sup>19</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 20, p.45-46

complete freedom to agitate for secession and for a referendum on secession by the seceding nation.<sup>20</sup>

This is how Lenin links the struggle for democratic demands, for the right to self-determination, with the struggle for socialist revolution:

Capitalism and imperialism can be overthrown only by economic revolution. They cannot be overthrown by democratic transformations, even the most “ideal”. But *a proletariat not schooled in the struggle for democracy is incapable of performing an economic revolution.*

...[For] Kievsky defence of national self-determination “in the epoch of finance capital” seems an unpardonable concession, to bourgeois views.

...Without effectively organised *democratic* relations between nations—and, consequently, without freedom of secession—civil war of the workers and working people generally of all nations against the bourgeoisie is *impossible*.

Through *utilisation of bourgeois democracy* to socialist and consistently democratic organisation of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and against opportunism. There is no other path. There is *no* other way out... In this path we must include *free secession and free merging of nations*, we must not fight shy of them, not fear that they will “defile” the “purity” of our economic aims.<sup>21</sup>

It is for this reason that revolutionaries, although generally in favour of large centralised states, endorse them *only* if these are not attained anti-democratically, against the will of their populations:

The proletariat...welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, *except that which is founded on force or privilege.*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 22, p. 146

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* Vol. 23, pp. 24-7

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* Vol. 20, p. 35

Lenin, therefore, did not support national independence nor the creation of new nation-states, but stood for the right of nationalities to fare as they wish, i.e. for their freedom to form a separate state.

### **Different Concrete Tasks**

At this point the second and most crucial distortion takes place, in concealing that Lenin insisted on:

...the necessity to *distinguish the concrete tasks* of the Social-Democrats of the oppressor nations from those of the Social-Democrats of the oppressed nations.<sup>23</sup>

When Lenin stressed that the revolutionaries of the oppressor nation have “different tasks” from those of the oppressed nation, he understood that the task of supporting “freedom of secession”, national rights, etc. belongs not with the socialists of the oppressed nation (something that would be tantamount to patriotism), but with the socialists of the oppressor nation, as their internationalist and democratic duty towards the people of the oppressed nation. And he insisted that it was not at all peculiar and contradictory for social-democrats of different countries to have different tasks:

People who have not gone into the question thoroughly think that it is “contradictory” for Social-Democrats of oppressor nations to insist on the “freedom to *secede*”, while Social-Democrats of oppressed nations insist on the “freedom to *integrate*”. However, a little reflection will show that there *is not, and cannot be*, any other road to internationalism and the amalgamation of nations...<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vo1. 22, p. 155

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p. 347



## **International Class Solidarity**

What is the immediate practical significance of these internationalist and democratic tasks of the workers of the oppressor nation?

They concern firstly the issues of trust and unity between the working classes of the various nationalities, so as to enable them to wage the struggle against exploitation successfully and without being distracted by the dominant nationalist ideology of the ruling class:

It makes no difference to the hired worker whether he is exploited chiefly by the Great-Russian bourgeoisie, or the Polish bourgeoisie rather than the Jewish bourgeoisie, etc. The hired worker who has come to understand his class interests is equally indifferent to the state privileges of the Great-Russian capitalists and to the promises of the Polish or Ukrainian capitalists to set up an earthly paradise when they obtain state privileges. Capitalism is developing and will continue to develop, anyway, both in integral states with a mixed population and in separate national states.

In any case the hired worker will be an object of exploitation. *Successful struggle* against exploitation requires that the proletariat be free of nationalism, and be *absolutely neutral*, so to speak, in the fight for supremacy that is going on among the bourgeoisie of the various nations. If the proletariat of any one nation gives the slightest support to the privileges of its “own” national bourgeoisie, that will inevitably rouse distrust among the proletariat of another nation; it will weaken the international class solidarity of the workers and divide them, to the delight of the bourgeoisie.<sup>25</sup>

Here we must pay particular attention to the significance of the *indifference* and *neutrality* of the proletariat in the “struggle for domination” of the various ruling classes; for as we shall see below, these

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<sup>25</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 20, pp. 424-5

play a determining role in the shaping of an internationalist policy for the Greek Cypriot working class.

### **Internationalist Education**

Besides the internationalist and democratic tasks, and the solidarity and unity of the working class, there is also the need for the “internationalist education” of the class, without which it will prove unable to achieve the construction of international socialism. This internationalist education is also achieved differently, according to the nation to which this working class belongs:

Can such internationalist education...be *concretely identical* in great, oppressor nations and in small oppressed nations?...

Obviously not... In the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressor countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it...

On the other hand, a Social-Democrat from a small nation must emphasise in his agitation the *second* word of our general formula: “voluntary *integration*” of nations.<sup>26</sup>

What is the necessity for such an internationalist education? It is not merely an issue of the proletariat “learning” the correct “lessons”, but one of indispensable *practical* importance:

The socialist revolution may begin in the very near future... It is possible, however, that five, ten or more years will elapse before the socialist revolution begins. This will be the time for the revolutionary education of the masses in a spirit that will make it impossible for social-chauvinists and opportunists to

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<sup>26</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol.22, pp. 346-7

belong to the working-class party and gain a victory, as was the case in 1914-16. The socialists must explain to the masses that British socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for the colonies and Ireland, German socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for the colonies, the Alsatians, Danes and Poles, and who do not extend their revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary mass activity directly to the sphere of struggle against national oppression, or who do not make use of such incidents as that at Zabern for the broadest illegal propaganda among the proletariat of the oppressor nation, for street demonstrations and revolutionary mass action—Russian socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for Finland, the Ukraine, etc., etc.—all such socialists act as chauvinists and lackeys of bloodstained and filthy imperialist monarchies and the imperialist bourgeoisie.<sup>27</sup>

The need for internationalist education of the working class and that of building internationalist revolutionary parties is perhaps the most important issue in our day, given the dominance of modern-day social-patriots on the Left (socialist and communist parties) throughout the world.

It is impossible for present day revolutionaries, who are everywhere a small minority, to grow in strength and help recreate a mass revolutionary vanguard of the working class, unless it is first realised that one of their most fundamental tasks is to try, in spite of their limited resources, to fulfil their part in the internationalist education of the working class and the formation of an internationalist minority within the class. And this cannot even begin to materialise unless the need of revolutionaries to take different stances, according to which nation they belong, is recognised.

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<sup>27</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol.22, pp.153-4

## **The Example of Poland**

This “distinction of tasks” between the socialists of the oppressor and the oppressed nations is of utmost importance, for it separates socialists from patriots. This point can be illustrated by one further historical example.

The example concerns the question of Poland and the controversy between Lenin and the Polish social-democrats over the clause in the programme of Russian social-democracy that upheld the right of nations enslaved by Russia (thus also of Poland) to self-determination; something ill-favoured by Polish social-democrats.

A couple of passages from Lenin’s writings of the time will impart the story:

In no nation does hatred of Russia sit so deep as with the Poles; no nation dislikes Russia as the Poles...

The Polish Social-Democratic comrades have rendered a great historic service by advancing the slogan of internationalism and declaring that the fraternal union of the proletariat of all countries is of supreme importance to them and that they will never go to war for the liberation of Poland. This is to their credit, and this is why we have always regarded only these Polish Social-Democrats as socialists. The others are patriots, Polish Plekhanovs [Russian socialist considered as the “father” of Russian Marxism, who ended up as a social-chauvinist]. But their peculiar position, when, in order to safeguard socialism, they were forced to struggle against rabid and morbid nationalism, has produced a strange state of affairs: comrades come to us saying that we must give up the idea of Poland’s freedom, her right to secession.

Why should we Great Russians, who have been oppressing more nations than any other people, deny the right to secession for Poland, Ukraine, or Finland?...[These people don't want to understand that to strengthen internationalism you do not have to repeat the same words. What you have to do is stress, in Russia, the freedom of secession for oppressed nations and, in

Poland, their freedom to unite. Freedom to unite implies freedom to secede. We Russians must emphasise freedom to secede, while the Poles must emphasise freedom to unite.<sup>28</sup>

No Russian Marxist has ever thought of blaming the Polish Social-Democrats for being opposed to the secession of Poland. These Social-Democrats are mistaken...only when they try to deny the necessity of including the recognition of the right to self-determination in the Programme of *Russian* Marxists.<sup>29</sup>

Lenin's stance is exemplary. If for the Polish social-democrats the internationalist stance was to decline to push for the self-determination and secession of their "own" nation, for the Russian social-democrats not to have done so, in opposition to their "own" government and "own" national interests, would have been a flagrant betrayal of internationalism.

### **Socialists or Patriots?**

It is quite clear that for Lenin revolutionaries in modern capitalist countries have no obligation to struggle for the national independence, national liberation or self-determination of *their own country*. Indeed, the contrary is the case. Lenin and the Bolsheviks spoke of the duty of *Russian* socialists to support the right to self-determination of those nations oppressed by Russia. It is evident that this policy has nothing in common with "social-patriotism". The position of the Bolsheviks was the true and relentless application of internationalism; for the duty to support this right was undertaken by the revolutionaries of the nation that stood to *lose* from its implementation, supporting it against the interest of their "own" nation, of their "own" fatherland, i.e. against the interest of their "own" ruling class.

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<sup>28</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol.24, pp.297-8

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* Vol.20, p. 430

In concluding this section, we must observe that the so-called “internationalism” of the present day socialist and communist parties—that is so agreeable with their patriotic declarations and actions!—is not a new phenomenon. Such socialists who greet with singular “internationalist” fervour every foreign national struggle in which their “own” ruling class stands to lose nothing, and more so if it stands to gain, were also around in the times of Lenin. As was accurately expressed by Lenin, this species of “internationalism” is nothing but:

...internationalism for export prevailing in our days among ardent - ever so ardent!—internationalists and Marxists who sympathise with every manifestation of internationalism in the enemy’s camp, anywhere but not at home, not among their allies... who sympathise with “the self-determination of nations” but not of those that are dependent upon the nation hounoured by the membership of the sympathiser—in a word, this is one of the thousand and one varieties of hypocrisy prevailing in our times.<sup>30</sup>

Such “exporters of internationalism” are all those in southern Cyprus and Greece today who passionately support the right of the Kurds and Armenians to self-determination in Turkey, but who cannot contemplate its application for the Turkish Cypriots.

Real, not hypocritical, internationalism is applied first in the context of our “own” country, in our “own” fatherland.

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<sup>30</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol.22, p.107

## Internationalism and the Cyprus “Question”

What, therefore, should our response to the Cyprus problem be, according to the Leninist politics on the national question? Does the policy of the “anti-imperialist, anti-occupation and national liberation struggle” emanate from the traditions of the workers’ revolutionary movement? The answer, based on Leninist policies, is without doubt negative.

One other conclusion is that we cannot address the problem in terms of “Cypriots” or “Cyprus” in general, but only in terms of the stance and the specific tasks of the Greek Cypriot and Greek working classes; always bearing in mind that these tasks are necessarily *different* from those of the Turkish Cypriot and Turkish working classes.

### Is There an Issue of National Liberation in Cyprus?

What must initially be clarified, before dealing with the Cyprus problem as it is posed today, is that the question of national liberation, i.e. of national oppression, does not arise in relation with the Greek Cypriots from 1960 onwards, i.e. since the departure of the British.

The problems of oppression of one or more nationalities by a dominant nationality within a state, *did* indeed exist in Cyprus. However, these were “solved”, partly in 1960, with the end of the national oppression of all Cypriots by the British, and thereafter in 1974, with the termination of the national oppression of the Turkish Cypriot community by the Greek Cypriots.

As concerns the presence of British military bases on Cyprus, which supposedly constitute a form of a restriction to national independence—leading thus to arguments that foreign domination and the need for national

liberation persist—it is worth recalling that such (American) bases exist also in Greece as well as in a host of other European states, including Britain and most notably W. Germany, imposed on the Germans by force of treaty at the end of the Second World War. Can it be that these countries also have “unsolved national problems”?

The British bases remain on the island with the consent of the Greek Cypriot ruling class, which not only isn't disturbed by their presence but actually benefits from it. Furthermore, these bases do not elicit the opposition of a very large section of the population and do not have attributes that are nationally oppressive for the Greek Cypriots. The only path for the working class to wage a struggle against them, without falling into nationalist traps, is that of a broader anti-imperialist and internationalist struggle that combines the fight against the bases with the struggle against the Greek Cypriot and Greek army, and linked with the national oppression of the peoples of the Middle East.

Something else mentioned in support of the doctrine of “dependence” is the Treaty of Independence itself, known otherwise as the Zurich and London Agreements, which were “imposed from the outside”. This argument doesn't have a leg to stand on, for this treaty is neither observed nor in effect. It was abrogated by Makarios as early as 1964, and no ruling class abides by it, even though they often hypocritically draw on it when it suits their interests.

There are also arguments that are based on the depiction of Cyprus as an “economic colony” of the West and a view of the Greek Cypriot ruling class as “a dependent” or “a pawn” of Western imperialism; thus maintaining, by reason of this “economic dependence”, the existence of problems of national independence. Not only are these arguments overexaggerated but, leaving this point to one side, *economic dependence* has no bearing whatsoever on the subject of national independence, self-determination and all other issues related to the national question as viewed by revolutionary socialists. It is quite revealing that while Lenin considered tsarist Russia as an imperialist



state, he at the same time regarded her as “entirely dependent”, economically, on the capital of “rich bourgeois countries”:

...there follows the arguments that the “right to self-determination” of small nations is made illusory by the development of the great capitalist powers and by imperialism. “Can one seriously speak”, Rosa Luxemburg exclaims, “about the ‘self-determination’ of the formally independent Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Serbs, Greeks, partly even the Swiss, whose independence is itself a result of the political struggle and the diplomatic game of the ‘concert of Europe’?!”... all this is a ridiculous and puerile attempt to be clever, for none of this has the slightest bearing on the subject. Not only small states, but even Russia, for example, is entirely dependent, economically, on the power of the imperialist finance capital of the “rich” bourgeois countries. Not only the miniature Balkan states, but even nineteenth-century America was, economically, a colony of Europe, as Marx pointed out in *Capital*... but that has nothing whatever to do with the question of national movements and the national states.

For the question of the political self-determination of nations and their independence as states in bourgeois society, Rosa Luxemburg has substituted the question of their economic independence. This is just as intelligent as if someone, in discussing the programmatic demand for the supremacy of parliament, i.e., the assembly of people’s representatives, in a bourgeois state, were to expound the perfectly correct conviction that big capital dominates in a bourgeois country, whatever the regime in it.<sup>1</sup>

We indicated that self-determination concerns only politics, and it would therefore be wrong even to raise the question of its economic unachievability.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 20, pp. 398-9

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* Vol. 23, p. 49

From whatever angle we examine the issue, the problems of national oppression in Cyprus have been solved. That this was accomplished in the first instance by reactionary “communist-eaters” like Grivas and the Greek Orthodox Church, and in the second by a thoroughly armed bourgeois army (and with a “socialist” leader at that) which had no inhibitions in oppressing the Kurdish people in its own state, does not in the least detract from the fact that in Cyprus there is no longer a “national problem” as perceived by socialists, i.e. a problem of oppression of one nationality by another *within the same state*.

## THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF AN INTERNATIONALIST POLICY

### **Neutrality Towards All Bourgeois Solutions**

Let us first examine what the “solution of the Cyprus problem” denotes when stripped from all the sentimental drivel that surrounds it. It stands for the “mutually acceptable” settlement of the question of *state power* by the ruling classes in conflict (lines of demarcation, percentages, jurisdiction, etc.). The outcome of such a solution would be the signing of a peace agreement, the resumption of “normal” diplomatic relations, and agreement that the status-quo will not to be challenged by any of the interested parties.

As we have already seen, Lenin argued that a “successful struggle against exploitation requires that the proletariat [is] free of nationalism, and [is] *absolutely neutral*, so to speak, in the fight for supremacy that is going on among the bourgeoisie of the various nations.”<sup>3</sup>

In our case, this *neutrality* is also translated into neutrality towards all “solutions” favoured and encouraged by the Greek, Turkish or Cypriot bourgeoisies. For these “solutions” are just one other expression of their

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<sup>3</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 20, p. 424

struggle for supremacy. We must be "neutral" irrespective of whether these solutions are "mutually acceptable" or de facto conditions as at present.

The implication of this neutrality for Greek Cypriot revolutionaries is that they should not be swayed by the dominant nationalist prejudices. For instance, partition or the recognition of the Turkish Cypriot state are taboos. We should not mince our words or accept these taboos. There is tremendous social and political pressure behind these taboos, and a tradition, as yet unchallenged, which perceives such slogans as "No partition" and "No recognition of the Turkish Cypriot state" as left-wing and anti-imperialist. Political clarity alone will save revolutionaries from succumbing to this pressure.

We must stress that however disguised these taboos are by fine declarations in favour of "human rights", for the "joint advancement of Greek and Turkish Cypriots in a common fatherland" or of "extending a hand of friendship and co-operation to the Turkish Cypriots", the trickery of such declarations is proved by events such as those of 1963-64, of 1967 and of 1974, by the participation in these events of those who today utter such pronouncements, as well as by their attempts to distort and suppress these events.

The favourite edict of the ruling class itself is that it seeks a "peaceful, just and viable solution" to the problem. If it was possible for *such* a solution to exist and to be agreed upon *in the current period* then we would *not* have been neutral—we would have supported it against all other solutions.

Such a solution, however, does not depend on an agreement that the ruling classes concerned may conclude, or impose on each other. As long as their conflict of interest continues (and it does not seem likely that it will cease doing so in the foreseeable future) so will the "peaceful, just and viable solution" be a deception, irrespective of its framework. It is not difficult to see that such a solution will of necessity be either unjust on the Greek

Cypriot refugees or will imply the national oppression of the Turkish Cypriots.

We are not, however, drawn into denouncing this or that solution on which ruling classes seem at times ready to agree, or which is likely to be established de facto as time progresses. Nor do we claim that the ruling class will “never” be able to arrive at a solution, even a relatively “peaceful, just and viable” solution. We charge that at least in present day conditions all such solutions (those that have already been proposed as well as those that may follow) are “unjust” and “non-viable”. What is vital is to dispel the illusion among workers that problems emanating from the Cyprus problem can be ameliorated today by the right formula of a Cypriot state or states. These problems arise from the antagonism between the Greek Cypriot (and Greek) bourgeoisie and the Turkish Cypriot (and Turkish). No solution at this historical juncture can nullify this antagonism or prevent it from leading to new wars, the national oppression of Turkish Cypriots etc. Our duty is to stress that:

...the struggle for a “just” and democratic peace...can be waged by telling the people the *truth*,... *that* in order to obtain a democratic and just peace the bourgeois governments of all the belligerent countries must be overthrown...<sup>4</sup>

We constantly stress that what we say applies to *present day conditions* and the *foreseeable future*, because we cannot know whether at a later phase there will be a change in the political conditions which give rise to the Greco-Turkish dispute so as to turn these ruling classes from opponents into allies, thus arriving at a solution to which we could not have any particular objections. Nevertheless, what matters is the present situation, for it is this that determines the political stance of revolutionaries, and it is to this that we have to respond.

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<sup>4</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 23, p.190

## **Greek Cypriot Workers and the Right of Turkish Cypriots to Self-Determination**

We do not “prefer” a “united” Cyprus to a “divided” Cyprus or the reverse; we do not prefer this or that form of federation or confederation, for we do not take sides in this bourgeois fight for supremacy. Thus, we do not conceal the true problem of the impossibility at present of a “peaceful, just and viable solution”. As concerns our response to the various bourgeois solutions, our tasks are the same as those of the Turkish Cypriots and Turkish revolutionaries.

However, neutrality towards all solutions is not the end of the matter for revolutionaries. Greek Cypriot (and Greek) workers also have the duty of supporting the *freedom* of the Turkish Cypriots to secede, and their *right* to have their own separate state: Something denied to them by our “own” bourgeoisie. That is how in the case of Cyprus these “different tasks” find application according to the country in which revolutionaries are situated and the nation to which they belong. In other words, we are indifferent, but not “indifferent” in a way which would suit our own ruling class, we are not “indifferent” to the point of being unconcerned about the wishes of the Turkish Cypriots and the aggression of our “own” ruling class towards them:

In the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressor countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their advocating freedom of the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it. Without this there can be *no* internationalism...

It is our duty to teach the workers to be “indifferent” to national distinctions. There is no doubt about that. But it must not be the indifference of the *annexationists*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 22, p. 346

We must explain, in other words, that for the working class, partition, double *Enosis* or the independent Turkish Cypriot state are neither worse nor better solutions than a unitary state solution or *Enosis*. On the other hand, however, so as not to wind up being “indifferent” towards the rapacity of our “own” ruling class, we must, as Greek Cypriot revolutionaries, fight against our “own” bourgeoisie for the right and freedom of the Turkish Cypriots to have their own state, and to merge with Turkey if they want to.

As for the propaganda of our ruling class, we must demonstrate the hypocrisy of its anti-partitionist hysteria, of its propaganda about “the danger of recognition of the Turkish Cypriot pseudo-state”, and of expressions such as “the pseudo-parliament in the North”.

What, after all, determines the “legality” of state boundaries for internationalists?

...Engels says in this article that in the course of historical development...”frontiers”...tarej increasingly determined by the “language and sympathies” of the population. Engels calls these frontiers “natural”... Today these democratically determined frontiers are more and more often being *broken down* by reactionary, imperialist capitalism.<sup>6</sup>

What is more, even from the point of view of bourgeois legality, the Greek Cypriots have no more right to characterise the state in the North as a “pseudo-state” than the Turkish Cypriots have a right to characterise the state in the South as “the Greek Cypriot administration”. It is enough to recall Makarios’ admission that he had “violated the constitution” as early as 1962, the events of 1963-64 and all other violations of the constitution by the Greek Cypriots.

“Our” ruling class, however, does not limit itself to propaganda alone. There are also concrete measures that it takes in order to prevent every

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<sup>6</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 323-4

independent political manifestation of the Turkish Cypriots, be it at the Council of Europe, the EEC, the United Nations, etc., or in sporting, cultural or other international events. We must express our opposition to all these, expose their hypocrisy, and, most importantly, to the best of our ability, struggle against them.

We must do this against all forms of boycott of the Turkish Cypriot Republic of Northern Cyprus, with particular emphasis on the economic blockade that is now in force.

If we don't do all these, then we are in danger, as Lenin wrote, of:

pandering to *nationalistic* prejudices, that is, recognising "one's own nation" as a model nation (or, we would add, one possessing the exclusive privilege of forming a state).<sup>7</sup>

The argument that the Greek Cypriot ruling class has *at present* no power over the Turkish Cypriots is quite misleading. Firstly, let us not forget their belligerence, as expressed through the economic, political and cultural blockade of Turkish Cypriots. Secondly, it suffices that their intention of achieving power over Turkish Cypriots is openly stated and that they take all available practical measures to attain such power. The argument that the Greek Cypriot ruling class has no such power at the moment and therefore does not need to be opposed does not differ, for example, from an argument which ignores or avoids the fight against a racist party on the basis that it does not appear capable of gaining power at the moment.

Let us use a historical example from Lenin on the significance of fighting against the very intention of national oppression. It concerned Alsace, an area with a mixed German and French population that formed part of Germany:

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<sup>7</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 20, p. 437

If one wants to be a Marxist politician, one should, in speaking of Alsace, attack the German socialist scoundrels for not fighting for Alsace's freedom to secede and attack the French socialist scoundrels for making their peace with the French bourgeoisie who want to annex the whole of Alsace by force—and both of them for serving the imperialism of their “own” country...<sup>8</sup>

Our defence of the right and freedom of the Turkish Cypriots to a separate state does not imply that we “prefer” or support the recognition of the Turkish Cypriot state, that we place ourselves in support of the Turkish Cypriot bourgeoisie, terminating thus our stance of neutrality. There is no reason why we shouldn't want to live together with the Turkish Cypriots within the same bourgeois state. We are indifferent, as we explained earlier, to the national privileges of either ruling class, be it the Greek Cypriot or the Turkish Cypriot. Our “indifference”, however, has nothing in common with the indifference displayed by reactionaries who show total disregard for the wishes and the democratic rights of those whom our “own” ruling class has oppressed in the past and strives to oppress in the future. We must not “forget” that a “unitary state” solution will lead to the national oppression of the Turkish Cypriots by our “own” ruling class.

For this reason, although we must keep a stance of neutrality towards all bourgeois solutions, and not oppose some of them in preference to others, at the same time we must resist and respond to all the attempts of our “own” ruling class to impose and justify the solutions it prefers.

We repeat and reemphasise this point because, although we have provided the relevant explanations (e.g. our support for the freedom of divorce does not imply an incitement to divorce), it is still almost certain that we will be misunderstood, in view of the great patriotic “sensibility” (it would be more accurate to say insensibility) of Greek Cypriots on the question.

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<sup>8</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 22, p. 327



So who will support the possibility of a united Cyprus? Who will say and emphasise that Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot workers have no problem in living together? There are those who can and must do so: the Turkish Cypriot revolutionaries and the Turkish Cypriot working class. Theirs is the duty to support the "freedom to unite", in response to all that their "own" ruling class is trying to impose.

The following objection is heard when the issue of "reapproachment of Greek and Turkish Cypriots" is raised: We will do our part, will the Turkish Cypriots do theirs?" The same objection will be heard in relation to what we say above: "Let us say that we grant the Turkish Cypriots their freedom to secede—will they support a unitary state?" It is obvious that to pose the internationalism of the oppressed as a precondition for the internationalism of the oppressor is the epitome of social-patriotic hypocrisy, which wants to "have its cake and eat it".

One other objection with some currency in left-wing circles is that "Marxists prefer larger states and do everything in their power to prevent the break up into small states". This is translated into the slogan "no to partition". Lenin, however, supported the preservation of large states, not always and everywhere, but only:

As long as *other conditions are equal* we are decidedly for centralisation and are opposed to the petty-bourgeois ideal of federal relationships.<sup>9</sup>

Are other conditions equal in Cyprus? Did there not exist national inequality and oppression? Should we not take into account the wish of the Turkish Cypriots? Should we not take into account the fact that our "own" bourgeoisie is trying to impose the formation of a unitary state?

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<sup>9</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 21, p.105

At any rate, for a Greek Cypriot socialist to have even the right to recommend a unitary state to the Turkish Cypriots, he must first have proved his sincerity:

The Swedish workers would have the right and the opportunity, without ceasing to be socialists, to agitate against secession, but *only* if they had waged a systematic, consistent and constant struggle *against* the Swedish government for Norway's *freedom* to secede. Otherwise the Norwegian workers *would not*, and *could not*, accept the advice of Swedish workers as sincere.<sup>10</sup>

In present day southern Cyprus nobody has waged, or has even come close to waging, such a “systematic, consistent and constant struggle” against the Greek Cypriot and Greek governments for the freedom of the Turkish Cypriots to secede. In the final analysis, the secession of the Turkish Cypriots should be the least of the worries of Greek Cypriot revolutionaries; they should, on the contrary, be concerned that their “own” government obstructs the Turkish Cypriots from seceding.

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<sup>10</sup> Lenin, *Works*, Vol. 23, p. 57

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