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# Cypriot Consciousness

Costis Achniotis

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Firstly, I clarify that I understand the definition of collective consciousness (and its contents) not as stable and unchangeable and of course I do not give it the dimension of a natural order. Collective consciousness just as any social concept is changeable and follows the shifting needs of of a society.

This changeability of course is not at all mechanic. The superstructure can drastically act on social evolution. For example the appearance of industries shapes the totality of workers that are possible to become carriers of labor consciousness. Labor consciousness is potentially common for all nations and can determine the totality of the workers of the world. Of course, this understanding is macroscopic. Other factors (individual consciousness) act and shape opposing subtotalities.

For the purpose of this text, I call Cypriot Consciousness, the consciousness of the Cypriot Independence. Therefore, its carrier is anyone who understands Cyprus and its people as an independent entity and strives as a consequence for the protection of the corresponding state institution, the Independent Cypriot State.

Of course the understanding of Cypriot Independence is basically a subject that has not been studied neither historically nor

sociologically, nor politically, and this stands for both communities. And it is entirely natural as since the 50's the consciousness for *Enosis* (Union with Greece<sup>1</sup>) and for *taksim* (separation<sup>2</sup>) were entirely dominant. Regardless of the acceptance of this so-called Independence in 1960, the governing teams of both communities were (or were acting like) for *Enosis* or for *taksim*. Therefore only this version of history was projected with its corresponding ideological response. It is indicative how misleading history is in Greek-Cypriot schools.

So it is not easy to realise that CPC (Communist Party of Cyprus) took an anti-union stand. I will quote an excerpt:

“...CPC sees as its duty to protest by any means, firstly against local English government which due to its indifference contributes in the intensification of intercommunal hate between the citizens of Cyprus and secondly against the fraudulent leaders of this place which spoke and will speak in the name of the Cypriot people. DOWN WITH ENOSIS – LONG LIVE THE INDEPENDENCE OF CYPRUS – LONG LIVE THE PROLETARIATS OF THE WORLD (Neos Kosmos, 25.4.1925)

We see that the understanding for Independence was already in combination with the effort to escape bicomunal conflicts.

Of course there is no doubt that since then, up until the categorical acceptance of “Enosis and only Enosis” by AKEL after about 25 years of inaptitude, the folk sentiment of the Greek-Cypriot community was all the more oriented toward Greece. The Turkish-Cypriot minority seems to have lagged behind in

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<sup>1</sup> The dominant Greek Cypriot Discourse which called for union with Greece.

<sup>2</sup> The dominant Greek Cypriot Discourse which called for complete separation of the two communities.

terms of following the developments and eventually takes a position after EOKA's struggle. When AKEL leaned toward *Enosis*, the Trotskyist Party of Cyprus (which was a small communist organisation) criticized them harshly, as they saw independence as a self-government of the oppressed classes, without mentioning the Turkish-Cypriot community.

I quote an excerpt:

“COMRADES,

May this year's 1<sup>st</sup> of May find us on the frontlines of the struggle for the handing down of power to our people, for SELF-GOVERNMENT. The traitorous abandonment of the position for Self-government on the part of the stalinist leadership and the adoption of the position for *Enosis* should make us come to our senses. We ourselves must stop the poisoning by *Enosis*. We must make the ill-fated leaders of our laborer's organisations get on the right track of serving workers' benefits. If they deny, we should set them aside and keep moving forward in a new polemic, with class-awareness and decisive leadership for the struggle for the handing down of power to the workers and farmers. *Enosis* can provide us neither better working conditions nor better wages, nor can it ensure our social emancipation. It will merely exchange our chains. Nothing more, nothing less.

WORKERS, FARMERS, OPPRESSED,

Move forward in the struggle for our emancipation. The struggle for our economic and political demands. The battle for the improvement of our working conditions and Social Security. For the creation of more jobs for the unemployed. For unemployment benefits. For the organisation and class awareness of all of the oppressed. For SELF-GOVERNMENT. For a Government

of Workers – Farmers, that feels for the worker and protects the farmer. For the complete national and social liberation.”

In this text there is no mention of Turkish-Cypriots. But in the municipal elections the idea of proportionate representation of Turkish-Cypriots is projected from the candidates of this party and at the same time the request for *Enosis* is condemned in exchange for the request for Self-Government. The request for *Enosis* is considered a request which is entirely bourgeois (Ergatis, 15 May 1949).

The organisation of Trotskyists broke up and got dismantled soon after. One of the reasons is that a fraction of the members becomes for *Enosis* as one can witness through the conversational essays in its later editions.

We can see that briefly before the 50s, the Greek-Cypriot left tends to ambiguously want independence without always condemning *Enosis* and combines this demand with an intense worker's politics (it is not by chance that the last labour struggles happened back then) and an understanding of danger that is included in a possible intercommunal conflict (and certainly other reasons such as geopolitical ones).

I do not know whether you, like myself, see that history actively justified the dears of the leftists of the era.

Whereas the Greek-Cypriot community votes for “*Enosis* and only *Enosis*” as one in 1950, and for the entire decade it leaves no space for anything else, I suppose that hidden within the bourgeois class exist thoughts for independence, because of course it cannot be by chance that Makarios gave that infamous interview in 1957 or that the national council of the time takes part, even in disagreement, in the negotiations in Zurich and London.

In making a report of the 50s, we can in summary say that the entire revolutionary force of the Cypriot people, Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot, was wasted on marginalising the conscious par-

ticipation of the working class, in order for an intercommunal conflict to be built and for neither self-government nor *Enosis* but for dependence to be given.

This is why Cypriot Consciousness is always a newborn consciousness. It has never overcome the stage of infancy. In consequence, its face is marked by the sorrow of profound old-age and the main sentiment that it can feel is the uncertain pain of existence. Cypriot Consciousness exists trampled under the feet of its adversaries who are caught in an infinite hand-to-hand battle. From the point of view of where it exists, on the ground, it sees them as enormous giants. Regardless of the constant trampling, the Cypriot Consciousness is saved by the fact that none of the giants is entirely dominant. Otherwise the Cypriot Consciousness would be lost.

The Cypriot Consciousness thinks itself weak. That's why it plays possum, waiting for better days.

The Cypriot Consciousness is weak and humble. It knows it and doesn't go to battle. It settles for cackling at the weakness of its far stronger adversaries who are nonetheless also too weak to impose their own order of things. In its ears the voices echo like empty words and fanfare.

Cypriot Consciousness has the arrogance of the marginals.