

Interview with AKEL-Cyprus

At a seminar arranged in Damascus, by «Al Nahj» Arab communist journal, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the defeat of fascism, we had the opportunity to interview Central Committee member Olympios Mikhael of AKEL-the Progressive Party of the Working People of Cyprus (the communist party).

After the latest negotiations between Cyprus President Kyprianou and the Cypriot Turkish leader Denktash, under UN auspices, failed, what is the situation for the Cyprus crisis?

Our party believes that the failure is not only due to the President of the Republic of Cyprus. The imperialists are highly responsible because they provoked the whole problem. The Turkish side also shares responsibility due to its intransigence. We consider that the draft solution provided by the UN Secretary General gives the basis for a solution acceptable to the two communities in Cyprus. The prospects were not fixed in the document of the UN Secretary General, but were to be fixed in this discussion. In our view, the problem of Cyprus cannot be solved outside the framework of the UN. It is preferable to discuss with the Cypriot Turkish side in order to find a solution acceptable to both communities. In this case, Cyprus must become an independent, integral, federal republic. It must continue to be non-aligned, and be totally demilitarized.

We consider this last demand as one of our tasks with international consequences, especially for the Middle East and Mediterranean area. If Cyprus is promoted to a bridgehead for the imperialists, the danger to other peoples around is great. We know that the imperialists would like to transform Cyprus into an advanced NATO base and headquarters for the Rapid Deployment Force. That is why we are fighting for a completely demilitarized Cyprus. This international aspect of the Cyprus problem must be addressed not only by Greek Cypriots, but by Turkish Cypriots as well.

Concerning the problem of our President's refusal to sign the UN document: Some people consider that we are trying to push him out, but this is not the main effort of our party. We are trying to have him sign the document prepared by the UN Secretary General, because

this will open the way to a peaceful solution. Of course, this would not solve all aspects of the Cyprus problem, but it would open the way for a fruitful discussion between our communities, so that the problem could be solved according to the wishes of our people, and not according to the interests of the imperialists.

In the parliament, 66% of the MPs voted for a resolution asking the President to sign the document prepared by the UN Secretary General. So there is now a kind of confrontation between this majority and the minority consisting of the government. Perhaps you know that in December, the President declared that he had stopped the democratic cooperation between the AKEL and DIKO party. We consider that this was on US advice. The Americans spread the illusion that they are going to help solve the Cyprus problem. When the President quit the democratic cooperation, he put his party in the minority, for Akel has more than 33% of the votes; we have 12 out of 35 MPs.

By coincidence, our party's opinion on accepting the UN document is shared by the right wing party. Of course, to avoid confusion, I must say that we have many differences with this party, first of all, political ones, then tactical ones. We stand for a Cyprus that is truly independent. The right wing party stands for a Cyprus closely involved with the West. We do not want Cyprus to be in any bloc, especially not NATO; that is why we prefer that Cyprus is non-aligned. This is a great difference with the right wing party, but since this party took about 33% of the votes, with our 33% this means 66% of the parliament is against the President. This is a political problem. We asked the President either to proceed to sign the document, opening the way to talks with the Turkish side, or apply to the people to see their reaction.

What is the danger to the Cypriot and Mediterranean peoples of the military bases in Cyprus, to

be used by the US Central Command?

The Central Command headquarters are in Turkey, but they would like to make Cyprus the headquarters. That is why the Americans are trying, on the premise that they are going to help solve the Cyprus problem, to appear as friends. They promise that after the solution of the problem, they will give an amount of money that would enable the Cyprus government to compensate those who are not returned to their homes. The US effort to appear as friends is in order to have Cyprus be flexible towards them and allow their use of military bases.

There is another aspect. The military bases are British, and the British are suffering financial difficulties. According to the Zurich-London agreements, if the British are not able to operate the bases, they must be returned to the Republic of Cyprus. The Americans are interfering so as to have the responsibility for operating these bases transferred to them.

We consider it a great task to fight for peace and prevent Cyprus being transformed into a military base for the US. Of course, it is known that in the area occupied by Turkish troops, a very huge military airport is under construction, the biggest in the Middle East area. The US prefers to make use of this base under an agreement with a new Cypriot government, because now the so-called Turkish state is a pseudo-state; it is not recognized. So the US prefers to be given these bases after a solution.

The US plans are not new. For example, twenty years ago, there was a scheme whereby Cyprus would be divided into two, with one part given to Greece and the other to Turkey. The imperialists continue insisting on such a scheme because it means that they could avoid the headache of Cyprus as an independent, non-aligned country. They prefer to join the two parts with the «motherlands», in order to transform Cyprus into a NATO base. Since Turkey