

New Cyprus Association: A life of 30 years....

New Cyprus Association (Neokypriakos Syndesmos) was founded on the 19th March 1975 and was directly the outcome of the deplorable and catastrophic events of July 1974: the coup and the invasion.

The idea was conceived by 9 individuals, of whom some didn't know each other. The shock and devastation that followed that ill-omened week of July 1974, triggered to the team an intense awareness what was in store for Cyprus, as well as feelings of guilt and responsibility. A declaration followed that urged us Cypriots 'to look upon our lives afresh'.

Without having to abandon one's ethnic origins, from now onwards, Cyprus would become the point of reference of the Association and the Cypriot Society would be looked upon as it actually was, a pluralistic society, equally attributing respect to all its cultures.

The basic objectives of the Association were set to be:

- The rapprochement of the two communities
- The strengthening of the Republic of Cyprus
- The strengthening of democratic institutions.

The objectives of the Association were self-explanatory, due regard being had to the fact that a little while ago a coup had been staged which had abolished democratic institutions, followed by an invasion which aimed at the permanent division of the two communities and the liquidation of the Republic of Cyprus.

With the reinstatement of democracy, there was limited scope for the Association to act in the direction of democratic institutions. Hence it focused on the other two objectives, those of strengthening the Republic of Cyprus and rapprochement. With regard to the former efforts were mainly concentrated on the distinction between the political and the cultural identity of Cypriots. The former being common for T/Cs and G/Cs and the latter referring to the cultural bonds of G/Cs and T/Cs with Greece and Turkey respectively. Unfortunately to a significant extent, the confusion of the two identities continues to persist until today, more so within the G/C community. In spite its negative effects, occupation and oppression inflicted upon T/Cs managed to help them clarify notions such as cypriotism and home-country.

As for the question of rapprochement, the Association put a lot of effort therein, at a time that -with the exception of a certain political party- this was not fashionable at all. On the contrary, it brought about a great deal of not very flattering qualifications. Besides, right after the Turkish intervention it was very hard for the average G/C to draw the line between Turkey and T/Cs.

Nonetheless, from the outset the Association was able to draw this distinction and subsequently, managed to create and maintain contacts with certain T/C politicians and individuals. In this respect it should be pointed out that at an early stage the Association had in its ranks T/C members, which in the years 1998-99 culminated in it having a T/C as president.

Our activities in this direction started as early as 1975, at a time T/Cs in Paphos and Limassol had not been moved to the North as yet and the need for assistance was manifest. This took the form of circulating T/c newspapers or providing food, medical care, legal assistance e.t.c. This assistance was later on extended to T/Cs who had opted to stay on in the free part of Cyprus.

Until this moment the Association continues to maintain contacts with the T/C progressive parties, N.G.O.s and broadly speaking, those who share the same views and visions for our country.

Generally speaking, the course of the Association all these years was marked by the publishing of articles on either side, the organisation of lectures, symposia and panel discussions, contacts with political parties, also on either side, painting and cartoon exhibitions, publications and as of last year, the teaching of the Turkish language to G/Cs in both Limassol and Nicosia.

On the whole, with the exception of the first years that followed the coup and the invasion, when the activities of the Association were well received, with few exceptions, it was treated by the press and the other media in a hostile way, and its platforms more often than not were twisted or at best misinterpreted. Nevertheless, the Association feels vindicated, since the Cyprus State has all these years been the foundation of Cyprus efforts for political survival, whereas rapprochement is nowadays looked upon as a sine-qua-non for the solution of the Cyprus problem and the survival of the country in the future.

On the occasion of its 30th anniversary from its founding, the Association has organized or envisages the following:

- Last January a sight-seeing trip within the walled part of northern Nicosia was conducted, for the students of Turkish classes.
- The day after tomorrow, the Annual General Meeting of the Association will take place in this hotel, with a first part reserved to its members and a second to its guests as well.
- On April 14th, the British High Commissioner will be delivering a speech on a topic related to the Cyprus Problem. The event will take place at the 'Curium Palace Hotel', in Limassol
- On May 13th-15th, along with other organisations, a symposium on the sociopsychological aspects of the Cyprus problem is organised in Nicosia, with the participation of both Cypriots and non-Cypriots.
- During the same month, a trilingual (turkish-greek-english) book on Cyprus Art of the 20th century will be published.
- At the beginning of June, the Association is contemplating presenting its platforms in Northern Nicosia, whereas during the same month a lecture on the Cyprus identity is envisaged in Nicosia.
- Towards the end of June, the annual gathering of the Association for its members and fiends will take place in Ayia Napa.
- Finally, a symposium on the Cypriot dialects and the importance for Cypriots to learn each other's language, will be organised during the months of October/November of this year in Nicosia.

In a nutshell, within the framework of its activities mentioned above, it is the intention of the Association to continue to contribute towards a solution of the Cyprus Problem. First priority for the Association remains the reunification of the country within the framework of a bizonal federation, on the basis-to the extent this is realistically feasible- of an improved Annan Plan. The Association also looks forward to the reconstitution of the Cypriot Society, on the basis of its inherent pluralism and respect for the cultures it is made up. This implies doing away with the antagonisms and polemics that plagued the two basic communities of the country

for decades, substituting for synergy and creativity, for the benefit of our common homeland.

New Cyprus Association.