

## **The 40 Year Anniversary of the New Cyprus Association 4.4.2015 Intervention by Takis Hadjidemetriou**

Forty years after the founding of the New Cyprus Association, we need to go back to that era and the conditions that led to its founding and formation: It was the moment when everything was collapsing. The coup d'etat and the invasion were accompanied by the failure of a whole system, along with its concomitant ideology, and, in extension, all those who represented it.

When we reached the most extreme point of this unprecedented crisis, faced with an insurmountable deadlock, we stood fearful in front of the situation that we were facing. Neither could we foresee a solution in the horizon, nor could we return to the past. The old slogans brought destruction and the present was not manageable. We needed a transgression; we needed new methods and new ways, unexplored till then, in order to face the situation. It was then, that the New Cyprus Association presented itself, with its own message.

So says the New Cyprus Association in its first declaration: "We were happy, we were honest, tolerant and liberal. We were living in peace and carefree, and we were keeping silent. Now we are paying for our guilty silence. We have to search into our thought and conscience, we the many, to make use of this sudden wake-up call of the seven days".

Its first message the awakening. However, awakening from what?

Awakening from the lies, the exploitation of the fatherland, and the state, the national slogan-shouting, the continuous reference to the national cause, the spurious adoration of anything Greek.

When the Greek officers with the Greek flag, their marching songs and their national slogans, were shelling the Presidential Palace and were murdering citizens, collective visions and orientations were collapsing; our mental and ideological senses of security were in shock. The Turkish invasion completed the human drama with the occupation, the murders and the uprooting of the population from their ancestral homes. July of 1974, became the moment that divided Cyprus' history in the pre-1974 and the post-1974 period, just like for humanity there is an era before and after Christ.

The New Cyprus Association came out with ideas and a programme beyond what we were used to, in this confusion and chaos, precisely at the moment when our lives' certainties ceased to exist and values we considered indubitable were shaken. It took the big leap.

What did the New Cyprus Association tell us?

That all the people who live in this country are Cypriots, each with its own cultural and religious characteristics; with the common interests and common experiences

and traditions that define our identity as Cypriots. That all, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins alike, are the cultural and political legacy of our common homeland, Cyprus.

The New Cyprus Association also said, that the Cyprus Problem is not a national problem which seeks its vindication through unilateral actions and violent methods and through the imposing of one side over the other. The Cyprus Problem, as the New Cyprus Association told us, is a political problem which seeks its solution through the cooperation and the keeping of a common course of everybody, especially of the two larger communities, the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots.

The New Cyprus Association sought new footings for Cyprus and its people.

It said that the Cyprus Problem is an issue of internal rebuilding, of the modernisation of the society, of the common course of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and of their jointly seeking of allies, for a united and not a partitioned Cyprus.

For the New Cyprus Association, this theoretical statement was not enough. It proceeded further, and demonstrated the ways through which this rapprochement would materialise.

It demanded the self-evident. What we ought to have done from the beginning, since 1960: to build a state and respect its symbols, to distinguish between the state and the community. To remember that we have a Cypriot flag and that only when we rely on the concept of the law-governed and democratic Cypriot State, could we hope for a better future.

For this to become achievable, all things that divided us should have been set aside and all those that united us should be brought to light,

And then, it said again something self-evident, that the Greek national anthem and the Greek flag cannot become the banners of our struggle for the rescue of Cyprus and the beginning of a new era in our history, through the symbiosis of Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

It also advocated for the responsibility, but also the obligation, of the Government and the people ,to honour the anniversary of Cyprus' Independence.

It did not only confine itself to the symbols and the obvious constitutional matters, it also talked about education. It argued with clarity that we should overcome the senseless patriotism and that we should give new proof of contact and love for the country and its people. To know about Greece, but to also get to know about Cyprus. It argued that our educational system needs a new content, adapted to suit the Cypriot pattern of symbiosis and cooperation between its people.

It reminded us that, next to the heroes of the national liberation struggles, we should add those that sacrificed themselves to support the Republic of Cyprus. Kavazoğlu and Mishaoulis, but also the first martyrs of the Republic of Cyprus, Ayhan Hikmet

and Ahmet Gürkan, as well as Kutlu Adalı who was later on murdered, because he was writing against the demographic change in Cyprus. And let us not forget Ihsan Ali, the pioneer in the struggle for the prevention of the bi-communal clashes.

However, all these meant the reversal of a long-established order of things. For the implementation of the ideas of the New Cyprus Association, all those who had contributed in the collective hypnosis, the deception, the division, the demagoguery and the abuse of power, should have had to leave. The corrupt ones had to be ejected, as their presence had since then been obvious, together with their provocative, illicit enrichment and their speculation of patriotism. The deep state of violence, terrorism, threats and murders, had to be neutralised.

History had to be re-written. Situations should have been documented, for history to be written in its detail and with the appropriate accountability, not with generalised aphorisms that served to acquit guilty parties. The actions of the generals' junta should have been registered and its collaboration with its Cypriot collaborators as well as EOKA B'. Turkey's invasion did not make the coup d'état disappear, as some Greek and Cypriot masterminds had hoped. Instead, it revealed how criminal the junta's betrayal was.

Myths about foreign conspiracies had to be dispersed, accountability should have been sought for within Cyprus and the guilt of those holding office and of the leaders, should have been demonstrated. And since there had been a crime, there should have been punishment.

We should also have revisited the responsibilities that befell the Church, as every other authority.

But this was not tolerated by the political/spiritual leaders of various levels and shadings and then the situation became tougher. The "Greek philologists", the "Greek men of letters", the masterminds of the Ministry of Education, the "Group of Greek Cypriots", and many other columnists in newspapers and magazines came forward. They were the masterminds that did not want change, since their own position would be shaken. And then they gave all of their power for the unshakeable preservation of the previous order of things.

The message of the leaders was that patriotism demanded that the New Cyprus Association be annihilated and that its members be silenced, because they were "Anglo-Saxons" and "Levantine", because they demanded the severing from the rest of the Hellenic World, because they were giving up their Greekness, in order to come closer to Turkish Cypriots. Moreover, because they promoted Cypriotism, denied and degenerated the national identity and reduced the fighting spirit of Greek people. They indicted the dark intentions of the Neo-Cypriots, their "ideas against the nation", their being "secret and obvious enemies of the nation", their being "a gang of slavo-Greek scums". They also went even further, calling for the state to intervene, to take measures, and indict those who undermine the national identity and deny and undermine their homeland.

It wasn't only the indigenous opportunist and corrupt officials who fought against the New Cyprus Association and its ideas; it was also the official Greek state, the Greek

Embassy. In his book, "Strictly Classified – Handle with Care", the Greek Ambassador in Cyprus, Christos Zacharakis, wrote that the New Cyprus Association with its "president, the Maronite Bartovanis, of no other known information". And he continues: "these are obviously dangerous moves which serve, either consciously or unconscientiously, various foreign interests, promoting grandiose slogans about the creation of a "Cypriot consciousness", "brotherhood" with Turkish Cypriots and coexistence in an allegedly "common" Cypriot fatherland" (pg. 39).

The Cypriot establishment together with the Greek nomenclature, under the pretext of saving Cypriots from the danger of losing their Greek identity, continued the policy of the most extreme nationalistic situations, which was no different than that of the junta.

Both them and their services, lived in ignorance and distortion. They named Andreas Mourtouvanis, descendant of a Greek bourgeois, nationalistic family, Bartovani, they considered him "of no other known information" and labelled him a Maronite, who also had conspiratorial plans against the Greeks.

It was unnatural and unacceptable for the Greek Ambassador to read and hear that Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Latins and Armenians, have Cyprus as their common homeland and that they all love the place of their birth, their own homeland.

Slander and lies, demagogy and deception were all tried methods that returned to the foreground by experts in this kind. They cultivated a new terrorism through lies and threats in order to render the New Cyprus Association useless and silence their voice. Such was the climate they created, that even a reference to Neo Cypriots would imply a 'traitor'; that they should not exist, nor should they be employed, nor should they be appointed at the Public Services. People who had nothing to do with the Association, but were characterised as Neo Cypriots, went to court to disassociate themselves from this label...

The members of the New Cyprus Association did not remain passive observers. They sued for libel, always winning in court. The masterminds, however, did not always take the law and logic into account. They insisted, with as much impudence as allowed to them by their position and power, of their assertions. The only thing they were doing, was to modify their assertions accordingly, so that they would elude the provisions of the law.

After forty years, the New Cyprus Association, is present and is waging its own struggle.

In this connection, I would wish to note three basic points:

First: The discussion that opened with its positions has its own history, present and future. Despite all the polemics that it went through, it has remained at the focus of discussions for forty years. Through its proposals, it has defined the agenda of subsequent developments. The contribution of the New Cyprus Association has been, its methodically acting, the expression and the advancing of straight forward positions. The New Cyprus Association has enlisted people, it has been at the

vanguard of political and cultural events, it has written, spoken, struggled without any reservations, with courage and honesty , hence it has convinced many, who from their own positions, entertain similar ideas.

Second: The New Cyprus Association is here, it exists, it produces work, with the things it does well and its mistakes, it creates, it creates perspectives, whilst its enemies have vanished, they have disappeared, and have been forgotten. Those who have insulted it, have remained with their insults only characterising themselves, without affecting the New Cyprus Association at all; the New Cyprus Association dares to think freely and remains a pioneering and convincing voice among the people.

Third: I do not know whether any other initiative has been adorned with as many insults as the New Cyprus Association, with only one initiative possibly equalling it, the Commission for the Restoration of Democracy in Greece. I think the association is the owner of one of the richest collections of insults and qualifications. And this is a mark of its success. Thus, it renders true the Gospel saying:

- Woe to those who have never been doubted,  
for this means that they have identified with all people.
- Woe to those who have not been persecuted,  
for this means that they never fought, not even against shadows.
- Woe to those who were not put to death,  
for this means that they did not pay the tax of life in full.

Conclusion: What matters in these crucial moments is not the office you hold, but what you have said, what was your stance and what responsibility you assumed.

It does not matter whether you made mistakes, or whether some of what you said, had a dose of exaggeration. What matters is whether you spoke boldly and with clarity, when others were silent. The members of the New Cyprus Association may today stand with pride and dignity and defend their positions, whilst some of their detractors are in jail and many others are washed-out, petty politicians.

They may also face history with a feeling of satisfaction, because in their ongoing struggle, they are not alone. There are now many who support similar ideas. And, most importantly, all signs now point to the fact that the way out to history, and the solution of the Cyprus Problem, only lies in the direction laid out by the New Cyprus Association.