



# AKEL *bulletin*

EDITED BY THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BUREAU

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**Interview given by Andros Kyprianou, Secretary of International Relations and member of the Political Bureau of the C.C of AKEL, to the daily newspaper "Haravghi" 7/5/2006**

***The opposition is claiming that in the two years that have elapsed since the referenda nothing has been done to overcome the negative climate and that the Cyprus problem is at a stalemate. What is your own assessment?***

I completely disagree with this approach. Quite a lot has been done, without of course underestimating the things that still need to be done. The first step made immediately after the referenda was the effort to tackle the problems, which arose from the fact that we took a negative stand regarding the proposal presented by the U.N. Unfortunately certain foreign forces reacted negatively to our decision and by drawing arguments from the positions of certain circles here in Cyprus, they strove to cause problems to the Republic of Cyprus because of the "NO" vote of the Greek Cypriots. We needed a period of time in which we had to effectively counter this effort, without implying that this effort has been tackled on the whole. Unfortunately, we ascertain that even today there are countries that are trying to find ways to cause us problems because we insist on a solution based on principles.

**21 May 2006**  
**Parliamentary**  
**Elections in**  
**Cyprus**

**May Day:**  
**Speech of**  
**Pambis Kyritsis,**  
**General**  
**Secretary**  
**of the**  
**Pancyprrian**  
**Federation of**  
**Labour PEO**

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Subsequently, an effort was made to formulate and elaborate the framework of our positions in relation to how we can move things forward. In April 2005 the National Council came to an agreement regarding the codification of our positions as to how we can move forward to reach a solution of the Cyprus problem. These positions of ours were explained to the U.N, who after holding discussions with the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkey came to the conclusion that there is a gap in the views of the two sides, a fact which does not favour the start of essential negotiations and that what was needed was an effort to bridge this gap .

AKEL began this effort by conducting discussions mainly with the Republican Turkish Party, but also with other forces of the progressive left political field of the Turkish Cypriot community, aiming precisely to see whether a possibility of bridging this gap exists. Unfortunately however it seems as though the priorities of the Turkish side, and I mean of the Turkish government and the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community, are different. It seems that they are worried, in my opinion unjustifiably to a large degree, about the forthcoming parliamentary elections in the Republic of Cyprus, with the result being that they do not respond, to

the extent that we ourselves would like, to the efforts to conduct a discussion and to see if any room for the cooperation between the two communities exists.

The meeting in Paris concluded in an agreement of the Greek Cypriot community with the General Secretary of the U.N. which I consider can contribute enormously in the right direction. On the one hand we have stated that the trust between the two communities needs to be restored and that the Turkish Cypriot side also accepts this. That is why we proposed the setting up of technical committees that will discuss issues of daily concern. At the same time however, we believe that since this gap exists a preparation is also required, so that this gap can be bridged and the start of essential negotiations between the leaders of the two communities can be facilitated. The President of the Republic put this issue to the G.S. of the U.N. and there was a positive response from Mr. Annan but unfortunately, up till now, there has not been a positive response from the Turkish Cypriot community. This fact precisely raises questions concerning the real intentions of the Turkish side in this concrete period the Cyprus problem is going through.

I want to conclude by saying that the Cyprus problem is a complex, intricate and I would say difficult problem as it has developed after the referenda. It is not possible from one day to the next to promote its course for a solution. A huge effort is needed to also convince the international factor and the Turkish Cypriots themselves, and consequently also Turkey that they should cooperate with us so that we can arrive at a solution that will serve the interests of both communities. At the same time a response to the efforts we are making is also needed from the Turkish Cypriot community. Otherwise however much good will, eagerness and desire we have, it will not be possible to start an essential dialogue that will arrive at an agreement.

***How much do the unbalanced statements of the American Foreign Secretary concern you and her one-sided incitements to Cyprus to lift the so-called isolation of the Turkish Cypriots and for not putting any obstacles towards the accession course of Turkey?***

First of all I would like to say that these statements and incitements do not surprise us. Unfortunately we are used to listening to the U.S.A, Britain and certain other countries making such statements and positions, but also through concrete actions, which do not in any way approach the Cyprus problem in a balanced way. On the contrary, they are striving to serve the interests of Turkey, intending ofcourse to serve their own interests.

Certainly the stand taken by the U.S.A and Britain does cause concern because we are talking about two countries that play an important role and ofcourse influence in one way or the other also the developments on the Cyprus problem. That is why, whilst we should be concerned about these statements, at the same time we should be looking for ways as to how we can form events which can either convince the U.S.A that it will also be in its own interest to find a balanced solution which will serve the interests of both communities on the island, or we should look at ways to thwart the attempt of the U.S.A. to impose their own will on our island.

The reference of Mrs. Rice that no obstacles should be put to the accession course of Turkey finds us in agreement only on a theoretical level and tells only half the story. In what sense is this so? We say that it is in the interest also of the E.U. but also of the broader region, if Turkey changes its structures, its way of thinking, and the way it operates, so that it adapts to European norms. If it manages to respond to these demands then it should continue without hindrance its course towards the E.U. Within this framework the Cyprus problem can also find a proper and just solution. If however Turkey does not fulfil its obligations, not only towards the E.U. itself but also towards the 21st century, does Mrs. Rice then perhaps suggest that the Republic of Cyprus or the E.U. as a whole should accept the accession of Turkey, even if it is along way from meeting the demands set by the Union? We disagree with such an approach.

***Do you adopt the view of the President of the DISY Rally Party that "by aligning our own interests with those of the U.S.A we can achieve from the Americans relevant rewards"?***

It is a philosophy which the Right has always cultivated and which has failed totally. Not only have we not achieved what we want from the Americans but they were the ones who carried out the twin crime against the Cypriot people, the coup d'etat and the Turkish invasion. Unless of course we deny the fact that that it was from the headquarters of NATO, and especially of the U.S.A, that the twin crime was planned. Furthermore there is another detail: the DISY party was in power for ten years. It supported this philosophy which Mr. Anastasiades has outlined. Where did this approach lead us to? It led us to the Annan plan. We do not consider that the Annan plan as it was presented without any changes could have constituted a viable and workable solution to the Cyprus problem. The DISY Rally party by following in essence this philosophy described by Mr. Anastasiades has totally failed to serve the well-intentioned interests of the Republic of Cyprus. I am not implying that we should be in a constant confrontation with the U.S.A. We must always strive to form relations which will enable us to operate in such a way so as to serve the well-intentioned interests of the Cypriot people. However this should not lead us into adopting a submissive stand and behaviour towards the U.S.A. Whatever and whenever we consider that the U.S.A are behaving in a way that goes against the interests of Cyprus, we should express in a responsible and constructive way our difference of opinion.

***Last week you visited Brussels together with the G.S. of the C.C. of AKEL and a big delegation. What were your impressions surrounding the meetings you held there with European officials in relation to the issues concerning the Cyprus problem?***

In our opinion the meetings in Brussels were very successful. They showed that these meetings are very useful and I would even say that these contacts are indispensable in the effort to inform the political groups in the European Parliament as correctly and comprehensively we can, but also those Commissioners that play a serious role in the efforts regarding Cyprus and the Cyprus problem. The conclusion we came to is that there is a great fruitful scope for the promotion of objectives and issues, which will serve the well-intentioned interests of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. At all the meetings without exception the concern and desire of the various political groups was expressed to contribute to the efforts to solve the Cyprus problem. This concern and desire must be utilised. From that point on what is needed is to convince about the framework in which this solution should be found. We consider that our visit to Brussels also contributed towards this end. We explained in my opinion our arguments in a convincing manner and there was a positive response from our European interlocutors to quite a large degree. First of all, the obligations Turkey has undertaken towards the E.U were made clear. If Turkey does not implement these obligations then it will have a serious problem with the E.U. itself. Our European interlocutors do not rule out the possibility of a crisis developing in the relations between Turkey and the E.U next autumn.

Apart from this, the Europeans have realised that the Republic of Cyprus as a member state of the E.U. should be treated in a way that will also show respect to European law but also to national legislation. That is to say, they understand that the Republic of Cyprus cannot be ignored in order to promote the interests either of Turkey, either of the Turkish Cypriot community, as these are perceived by some and not as they really are. I also consider this as very important. They now understand that they cannot find ways and outlets that violate either European law or national legislation in order to serve some demands of Turkey. This is something that we need to cultivate even more.

In conclusion, I would say that the atmosphere has begun to change within the E.U. I do not imply that everything is going smoothly or that we have managed to convince our partners on all matters but certainly we have changed the atmosphere in a positive way.

The purpose of our visit to Brussels had more to do with conveying the message of rapprochement between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, an issue on which AKEL has led the way from its very foundation.

***How do you assess the relations between the two communities today?***

The question of rapprochement is of huge importance for AKEL, because we consider it as the corner stone for the achievement of a solution of the Cyprus problem, the corner stone which will contribute to the efforts to solve the Cyprus problem, but that will also lend support to any solution agreed upon in the face of any obstacles that the solution will face in the course of its implementation. It is a policy which AKEL has followed since 1974 with consistency and responsibility, conducted of course always on proper principles and in the correct framework.

We had agreed with the Group of the Left to organise this meeting a few months ago. I should also add that when the Contact Group of the E.U. with the Turkish Cypriots visited Cyprus and met with Demetris Christofias it called on AKEL to undertake such initiatives. We also therefore responded to their call. That is why we decided the holding of such events in Brussels, that is to say in the very heart of the E.U, in order to convey outside of Cyprus this message also to Europe.

Two very successful events took place. One event was held in the European Parliament with a clear political content but also with the participation of many other personalities, and the other event with a cultural content which took place in a theatre in Brussels. We consider that the meetings succeeded in conveying the proper messages. I would also with this opportunity like to thank those mass media in Cyprus that contributed to projecting correctly and objectively this effort of ours in Brussels.

It is a fact that our relations with the Turkish Cypriots today are not at their best level and this is due to the fact that the Turkish Cypriot community voted "Yes" and the Greek Cypriot community voted "No" in the referenda. We believe that this is something temporary. We want to meet with the Turkish Cypriots, to explain to them why we were forced in the end to vote "No" in the referendum, to convince them that we are truly concerned in achieving a solution to the Cyprus problem, a solution however which will also serve the interests both of the Greek Cypriots as well as of the Turkish Cypriots. We want to meet with the Turkish Cypriots to explain and convince them that in fighting for the interests of the Greek Cypriots we are fighting at the same time for the interests of the Turkish Cypriots. It is necessary that they extend their hand to us so that we can work together so that we can create the preconditions for the beginning of substantive negotiations that will lead to a solution to the Cyprus problem.

***We do not follow the logic that we need to form free market conditions, through the formulation of which the needs of people will also be served. We say that there are some groups of the population, the low and middle income strata, the working people of this country who need the support of the state and society.***

***The 100 page pre-election programme of AKEL-Left-New Forces deals with all the serious issues concerning the Cypriot citizen. What in your opinion separates the programme of AKEL from the programmes of the other parties?***

The first thing I would like to say is that AKEL through the years has always presented its positions before the Cypriot people on the eve of election campaigns, whether presidential elections, parliamentary elections or local self-government elections. This is not something done only today. Secondly, for us it is of greater significance what a political party is promoting and implements in reality during the whole duration of the five years between electoral campaigns and not what is written in an election programme. This is because it is very easy for a political party on the eve of elections to use nice-sounding slogans, the propagation of a policy in favour of people's interests, which appeals to people, but what is more important is what it will do when and if it gets into power. Precisely because some have transformed themselves a lot in the

past few months, and I am referring specifically to the DISY Rally party, I think that no one should put any faith in all that it has been saying now, but to judge it on the basis of the policy it implemented in the ten years it was in power. The important thing therefore is that what AKEL promises in its election programmes, it strives to promote and implement during the following five year period. All those issues that we had referred to in the previous five year period were promoted both inside as well as outside of Parliament. The programme of AKEL differs from the rest of the programmes of other parties also for another reason. It is programme which solely has people's interests at its centre of attention. We do not follow the logic that we need to form free market conditions, conditions for growth as some say and that through the formulation of these conditions the needs of people will also be served. We say that there are some groups of the population, the low and middle income strata, the working people of this country who need the support of the state and society. It is on the basis of this logic that we elaborate our proposals. Therefore our proposals strive to serve the ordinary man and woman; the people of daily toil; the people who find it difficult to make ends meet, face modern demands and need the support of the state and society.

Apart from this, we have also included in our programme proposals which open up a perspective for our country, in a progressive direction laying special emphasis on those sectors that are indispensable for people, such as the sectors of health, education, culture, sports, the environment, that is to say all matters that make the life of working people better. Also the needs of young couples, of young people in general, people with special needs, are all included in our election programme, as well as our positions concerning the contemporary world we live in, paying particular attention to issues relating to the E.U. and how they influence our efforts to solve the Cyprus problem.

***On what issues that you have referred to, and many others that are included in the election programme, do you give more importance to and which issues will the Parliamentary Group of the AKEL-Left-New Forces promote immediately in the new Parliament?***

AKEL is elaborating a framework regarding the priorities which we are putting forward for the next five years and we shall announce it very shortly at a press conference to be held by the G.S. of the C.C. of AKEL. That is why I consider that it will not serve any purpose to dwell in a rather sketchy way on these issues. Our goal suffice to say is to better the quality of life of ordinary people and this will be the main crux embodied in all of these proposals for our intervention in all those sectors of contemporary Cypriot society which can contribute effectively and decisively to the improvement in the life of working people.

***The goal of AKEL in the parliamentary elections, as it has been repeatedly stated, is the reaffirmation of AKEL as the first political party. Why does AKEL attach such great importance to this question?***

I want to make it clear that we do not attach such great importance so that we can boast by saying that we are the first political force or that we will have the upper hand over DISY in our relations. In no way is this true. We want to be the biggest political force in the country precisely because we consider that in this way we can contribute even more effectively in serving the needs of the contemporary Cypriot citizen and the efforts to solve the Cyprus problem, but also regarding questions of internal administration.

A political force if it is powerful both in parliament, but also among the people, and this is our slogan, can promote much more

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effectively all those measures which it considers correct, so that the preconditions can be created that will enable the achievement of an agreement on the Cyprus problem, but at the same time to promote policies that will serve working people. There is no other reason why AKEL wants to be the first political force of the country.

***What comments can you make concerning the developments relating to Iran and the persistence of the U.S.A, as well as of some their European allies, in promoting the imposition of sanctions?***

As AKEL we follow very closely the situation in Iran. First of all let me say that we would like to see a great deal more democracy in Iran, that human rights should be fully respected and that this country functions in a way that will respond to the challenges of the 21st century. However, this is the right of the Iranian people to decide, regarding how they will move forward in the future and we consider that the U.S.A. and certain European countries must respect this right. The approach that states that "we consider it correct that this should be done in Iran and will shall impose this through the force of weapons", as was the case in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, is very dangerous. Effective controls must be conducted not only regarding Iran, but also on all the countries of our planet which have nuclear weapons, that is to say that a comprehensive effort must be made for the disarmament of nuclear weapons. I do not understand why the U.S.A. and the other countries have the right to have such kind of weapons and some other countries do not have such a right. There mustn't be any double standards applied. That is why we support that a concerted effort for disarmament should be made and within this framework all the necessary pressures should be exercised on all countries to abandon their nuclear weaponry. As AKEL we shall fiercely counter the efforts of the U.S.A. and its allies to allegedly solve the problem through the waging of a new war. We consider that wars not only do not solve problems, but they create even more. The peoples of Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq have been ruined and we believe that we have no right to remain indifferent in the face of the efforts by the U.S.A. to also ruin the Iranian people.

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**Speech of Pambis Kyritsis, General Secretary  
of the Pancyprian Federation of Labour PEO  
at the May Day meeting held in Nicosia 1st May 2006**

Dear colleagues,

We have gathered here again this year to honour with all the dignity the great day of the working people deserves on the 1st of May. This great day of the working class, with its red blood-stained banners, rallies and mobilises the people of labour from all corners of the earth in the struggle for dignity, bread and freedom.

On this day our memory goes back to those radiant, glorious and strong figures of the pioneer martyrs of Chicago. In an age when the workers were mere spare parts of machines, the rage and despair from the brutal and inhuman exploitation they were living through led them to that heroic rebellion of the 1st of May of 1886, which the police and militia with the full cooperation of the bullies of the employers, drowned in blood the innocent but courageous workers. Such was their frenzy for revenge, but also their fear of the sleeping giant that was waking up and that was becoming aware of its own strength and role, that even after the massacre they hanged tens of leaders of the uprising. Their only crime was that they were seeking a way out of their misery and depravation and the right to 8 hours of work, 8 hours of sleep and 8 hours of rest and cultural development.

By gaining strength and inspiration from that heroic rebellion under the flag of May Day, which became red from the blood of innocent people, millions of working people since then throughout

the world have rallied their forces and have waged fierce class struggles, thus gaining economic, trade union and social rights and above all their dignity.

This sacred day has been linked also in our own country from the outset with the emergence, activity and struggles of our workers movement. The Cypriot pioneer workers, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, inspired by the flame of the great workers mobilisations in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century and especially by the bright spark of the revolution of the Bolsheviks in Russia, linked their struggle and visions from the very beginning with the militant traditions of the international working class. It's not by chance nor coincidental that the first May Day mobilisations in Cyprus took place at the same time of the foundation and activity of the Communist Party of Cyprus (CPC), whose worthy successor is the party of the Cypriot Working People AKEL.

The establishment and activity of the Communist Party in our country connected the Workers movement with the socialist ideals. It added a political and ideological content to class struggles; it gave it strength and impetus so that it could overcome the harsh and unfavourable times and reach new heights and as a consequence today we can reap the benefits and rights which until a few decades ago could only have been seen as some dream that could not be realised. Since then the class-based trade union movement and the Left, have been and are fighting together and won democratic, trade union and social rights, dignity and a better quality of life for the working people, for the weak and hard done by.

***The world has entered the 21st century and despite the struggles waged and the sacrifices made, despite the carnages witnessed in the two world wars which the crisis of capitalism had led to, continues to be a world full of contradictions and conflicts, where luxury and hyper-consumerism co-exist with deprivation, mass squalor even also hunger and famine.***

Therefore in honouring this sacred day we pay due homage to our own workers, the pioneer Cypriot workers, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, to our veterans, who with courage and self-sacrifice took into their own hands the cause of the working class and as true pioneers opened up new avenues so that the younger generations of working people today can enjoy the rights and benefits gained through struggle.

We owe these pioneers our respect, love and gratitude, and we convey it from the bottom of our hearts.

Colleagues,

The world has entered the 21st century and despite the struggles waged and the sacrifices made, despite the carnages witnessed in the two world wars which the crisis of capitalism had led to, continues to be a world full of contradictions and conflicts, where luxury and hyper-consumerism co-exist with deprivation, mass squalor even also hunger and famine.

Especially in our times, the inspirators of neoliberal capitalist globalisation are striving to turn the clock of history backwards. The forces that are dominant today on an international level are not only not working to overcome the contradictions and conflicts, are not only they not concerned about the bleak future of a development that is destroying even these natural resources that are necessary for the reproduction of human society itself, but on the contrary the only thing they strive to do is to impose their political, economic and military rule to the detriment of peace, security, justice and the very dignity of the peoples of the world.

This unfortunately is what the new world order is all about which the United States of America and its allies is seeking to arbitrarily and violently impose, proclaiming themselves as global rulers, accusers, judges and policemen and asserting the right for themselves to intervene flagrantly in the

name of the so-called fight against terrorism wherever and whenever they consider that this will serve their political, economic and geo-strategic interests.

On this sacred day, the day of solidarity and common struggle, we condemn vehemently the new schemes of the Americans for the waging of new adventurous wars by using the crisis with Iran as an opportunity.

It has been proven beyond any logical doubt that neither the war and interventions in former Yugoslavia, nor the occupation of Iraq, nor the enticement and tolerance of the massacre committed against the Palestinians, nor the intervention in Afghanistan have brought a better tomorrow for the world or have consolidated peace and security. The only thing they have achieved is the shedding of the blood of innocent peoples, to intensify even more the chaos between the developed and developing countries, to revive terrorism which is being fed by despair. Arrogance and arbitrariness is being promoted as the method of settling international problems and relations between states.

They should know that a new adventurous war in Iran will face the resistance of the international working class, all the peace-loving people of the planet, whose reaction will be even bigger than they could ever imagine.

Our people are waging, within the framework of this new world order, their own struggle for the reunification of our homeland.

There is no doubt that whatever gains have been won by working people cannot be considered as being permanent and stable in a divided occupied homeland.

We remain committed to a bizonal bicomunal Federal solution. We are striving for a solution that will truly reunite our homeland, which will serve above all the interests of Cypriots themselves, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and not the interests of any foreign powers. We want a solution as soon as possible, a solution however that will be workable, safeguard the human rights of all Cypriots and that will be viable so that it can stand the test of time.

At this point I feel the need to greet and welcome the presence with us here today of the representatives of the Turkish Cypriot Platform "This country is ours". We have forged links with these organisations in the many years of common struggles and actions for the reunification of Cyprus, for peace and the prosperity of our people.

This year we have made one more step in this cooperation between us by publishing a common May Day Declaration and common May Day poster, which has been distributed throughout the whole of Cyprus.

By overcoming bitterness or even different assessments, the progressive class-based forces of the Cypriot trade union movement have found the way to concentrate their efforts on the future and in a calm and comradely manner and fashion, reaffirm their dedication to the need for the reunification of our homeland and people, to the need for an agreed, viable and workable solution that will be acceptable to both communities, utilising this great day of solidarity and comradeship to project their persistence and desire for common struggle for the reunification of our common homeland.

I also greet the presence of Turkish Cypriot workers at our meeting here today who are working in the free areas and who have shown their trust in us in the struggle for the defence of their rights by joining the ranks of PEO.



For us the fight to protect the rights of Turkish Cypriots who are working in the free areas and the safeguarding of the implementation of collective agreements and labour legislation for all working people is our number one priority.

PEO is proud because all of its history is a history of class brotherhood and common struggles of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot working people. Many times in the past Cadres and militants of PEO have in the past been many times the target of extremists and the fanatics of hatred and "ethnic cleansing", precisely because PEO represented and represents a staunch promoter of class brotherhood and common struggle for the future of our common homeland.

Many Turkish Cypriot but also Greek Cypriot trade unionists, cadres and militants of PEO have paid even with their own blood for the resistance they put up and in confronting the reactionary and chauvinist circles.

That is why we feel a sense of unbearable provocation when today some people and forces, whose own track record and past hardly allows them to do so, to also give us lessons surrounding our sensitivity on matters of cooperation, common activity and rapprochement with the Turkish Cypriots. Our own type of rapprochement is the rapprochement we learnt from our participation in fierce class and social struggles and it is as an inseparable part of our being, instilled in our ideological visions and we carry it with us from the heritage handed down to us from our grandfathers and grandmothers, from our fathers and mothers.

Dear colleagues, comrades,

This years' May Day sees the working people of the world and in Cyprus rallying together in the struggle against the attempt to restrict workers gains, against the deregulation of labour and the undermining of the social state.

The pressures deriving from the neoliberal policies of the ruling circles of the European Union and being put on the working people in one way or the other are being transferred also to our country.

The employers are intensifying their attacks in an effort to undermine collective agreements and use economic immigrants as a force of cheap labour.

We experienced this neoliberal attack especially during the ten years of the administration of the Right, which today finds itself in the opposition.

The audacity with which the opposition today tries to portray itself more or less as the defender of the poor and the weak, as the defender of meritocracy and good governance, even as the defender of the semi-governmental organisms and the public sector is really beyond belief. In the decade of they were in power the working people felt from their own first hand experience the neoliberal anti-popular philosophy and policy of DISY.

Do working people dare forget that we were the ones who stood out as a powerful obstacle in their efforts to undermine and destroy the institution of COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) which they tirelessly tried to promote and that their machinations managed to curtail and weaken this institution by deducting 3% from their wages; that we fought against the undermining of the social state; that we impeded and thwarted the attempt to privatise the semi-governmental institutions of public interest; that we were the ones who stopped the attempt to undermine the Social Security Fund when they were ready to throw the savings of the Fund into the "empty hole" of the Stock Exchange with incalculable consequences for working people and pensioners.

It is obvious that today we are able to tackle the pressures exercised by the neoliberal policy, which is dominant in the European Union, from stronger positions. Not only because we have a powerful class-based trade union movement, capable of defending working people and collective

agreements, but also because in the governance of the country we have a government elected through the cooperation of the progressive, democratic forces with a progressive programme in favour of people's interests that is not characterised by neoliberal methods. It is a government in which AKEL, the party of Cypriot working people, has a direct and active participation. The participation of AKEL aims at promoting the interests and rights of the common man and woman.

The new government, despite the difficult conditions it found when it came to power, despite the bad state the economy and public finances were in, has produced a worthy positive project.

AKEL and the Popular Movement have played a leading role in the work done through its active and essential participation in governance but also through its timely and well-thought out and elaborated proposals.

The new government has put an end to the policy of privatisations, withdrawn the bill that sought to penalise the right to strike, has shown respect to the tripartite dialogue and to the procedure of free collective bargaining and has stated that COLA is a blessing and not a curse. In the three years that have passed, there has been a significant increase in the minimum wage as set out by a government decree. Social policy measures have been implemented regarding the vulnerable sections of the population, such as the pensioners, five-member large families, single-parent families, those receiving public grants, inhabitants of mountainous regions, refugees, farmers, women and young people.

In referring to this positive account, we do not in any way consider that this means that we are completely satisfied since many other things still must be done that have not been done so that the administration can fully meet the expectations and demands of the working people and our people.

The following are among our immediate priorities:

- The revision of the rate of the non-taxable amount to 12,000 pounds as well as the revision of the rest of the tax scales.
- The restoration of COLA as it was before the decision of the previous government to deduct consumer taxes from its calculation.
- The more effective implementation of the law regarding safety and health, as well as the law regarding the equality between men and women.
- The extension of the benefit for mothers to all mothers on a pension with large families and the provision of an Easter benefit to pensioners.
- The speeding up of the implementation of the National health Plan.
- The further strengthening of the Apparatus and Services for the Protection of the Consumer, so that it can intervene more decisively in combating price speculation and the cases where the legislation has been violated.

On the issues relating to the deregulation of labour relations and the undermining of collective agreements, we are aiming at the promotion of institutional and legislative changes which would strengthen and safeguard in practise the right to organise workers in trade unions and cover collective agreements. We have submitted this position in a package of detailed and concrete proposals at a recent joint press conference given by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of AKEL and the General Secretary of PEO.

***May Day represents the best platform to send out a clear message: that we remain steadfast, persistent and decisive in our demands and we will not negotiate nor discuss any arbitrary counter-demands of the employers associations which, instead of taking us forward, are aiming to take us a long way backwards into a time that has been gone forever.***

The Ministry of Labour in our opinion should move forward immediately to the initiation of an essential social dialogue which should aim at the adoption of those regulations that are necessary, so as a more satisfactory and effective protection both of the right to organise workers in trade unions but also of collective agreements and the rights of working people can be secured.

On this opportunity I would like to point out the crucial importance of this 6 month period concerning the issue of the renewal of the collective agreements of large sections of working people. The Trade Union movement headed by PEO is struggling, as it is well known, to gain increases above the rate of productivity that will improve the living standard of working people. We consider that our demands are logical because the economy can handle such demands and these demands are fully substantiated in detail. We are campaigning for the inalienable right of working people for what is right and for a logical share of economic growth. We believe that the need for convergence within the framework of the European Union should also regard the wages of working people, but also to the attacks wages have witnessed during the past few years due to the undermining of the Cost of Living Allowance.

Unfortunately, the reactions of the employers' organisations in the construction and hotel industry have been disappointing up till now. The employers, instead of concentrating on the demands of the Trade Unions and on the need for a calm and serious negotiation, are submitting counter-demands which are aiming to undermine collective agreements and infringe these very gains themselves.

May Day represents the best platform to send out a clear message: that we remain steadfast, persistent and decisive in our demands and we will not negotiate nor discuss any arbitrary counter-demands of the employers associations which, instead of taking us forward, are aiming to take us a long way backwards into a time that has been gone forever.

Colleagues,

May Day this year finds the people's movement together with PEO in battle positions, bearing in mind that only 3 weeks separate us from the parliamentary elections of the 21st of May. PEO, as it has always done, is today standing unswervingly shoulder to shoulder at the side of AKEL in this great election confrontation.

We want a Parliament that will be sensitive to the problems and goals of the working people; a parliament dominated by the forces of progress and social justice; a parliament that will respect the gains of working people and protect the right to organise workers and collective agreements.

The victory of AKEL-Left-New Forces in these parliamentary elections will add more strength to our forces; it will be a victory for the working people, a victory for Cyprus and its people. It will halt the road of the conservative forces, who are dreaming of their return to power so that they can continue from where they left off; it will block the road to those forces that are tied by a thousand and one strands to the interests and objectives of big business.

*Always together for progress and justice!*

*Always together on the road charted by the pioneers, on the road of honour and duty!*

*Long live Workers May Day!*

*Honour and Glory to the pioneer workers!*