

SOLUTION: HOW CLOSE TO CYPRUS

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Abstract

The reunification of the island of Cyprus is now in a more promising stage. It seems that the majority of the Greek Cypriots thought the second round may open up a possibility for a new initiative to reunify the island and this could be read as a positive development in the Greek Cypriot side. It is quite obvious that if the incumbent Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos was re-elected, there would no real change in the current situation and the future of the island still would be foggy.

The very fresh Greek Cypriot president Demetris Christofias of the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), in his speeches at various meetings and rallies, has said that he and his party believe in a “bi-communal, bi-zonal federation based on political equality” and that, if elected, he will solve the Cyprus problem in the shortest time possible.

It sounds good, but what he keeps saying when compared to what he is actually doing and the still standing Enosis resolutions of the 1960-70 era, “The Dark period”, seems only a fairy tale.

The Elections

The logo consists of the letters 'TCE' in a white, serif font, with a small 'TM' trademark symbol to the upper right. The text is centered within a solid red rectangular background.

The left wing AKEL Party leader, Demetris Christofyas, eternal friend of Papadopoulos, himself has joined the presidential electoral race first time ever during the life span of AKEL, since 1941, held on February 17, 2008 in the Greek Cypriot side,

Although, Tassos Papadopoulos, one of the architects of the genocide plan for wiping off Cypriot Turks on the island, faced a crushing defeat in the elections, the center right Greek Cypriot DIKO party of the ousted Papadopoulos, supported AKEL leader Demetris Christofias in the second run-off Presidential elections.

The AKEL Party refusing the Annan Plan won the race with the support of DIKO, another political Greek Cypriot political party refusing the Annan Plan, led once by the former president Tassos Papadopoulos.

Mr. Demetris Christofias the General Secretary of the Communist party AKEL, the Progressive Party of the Working People, a builder's son with the common touch, became the European Union's first communist head of state, defeating a right-wing rival in Greek Cypriot elections that have renewed hopes of a peace deal to reunify Cyprus.

If today's conditions were the post World War II, the capitalist-communist bipolar period, a communist winning the presidency on the island of Cyprus, which

has a strategic position in the eastern Mediterranean, would have been avoided at all costs.

The CV

The new Greek Cypriot President has been the leader of AKEL since 1988, an MP since 1991 and Speaker since 2001. He was born in 1946 in the port of Kyrenia, now in the territories of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, TRNC, and has the official status of a refugee from the Turkish intervention held on July 20, 1974 after the Coup D'Etat organized by the officers from Greece on July 15, 1974. He is a keen football fan and met his wife, Elsie, while studying in Moscow. The new president is a father of 3 sons.

Political Standing

Mr. Christofias replaced a septuagenarian hardliner who led Greek Cypriots in a rejection of a UN reunification plan four years ago. Tassos Papadopoulos was surprisingly dumped by voters in the first round of the presidential elections, leaving two moderates on the Cyprus problem from opposite ends of the political spectrum contesting in the second run-off.

Greek Cypriot President Mr. Dimitris Christofias, 61, has better contacts with the Kremlin than with the White House or Downing Street and once declared that Britain, the island's former colonial master, had "proved our bad demon" for the past half a century. Yet Mr. Christofias's victory will cause few jitters in Brussels or London. AKEL puts pragmatism before its Marxist-Leninist ideology and is social democrat in practice. Yet he sometimes rhetorically may pay tribute to his communist roots but in substance he possibly will be quite pragmatic, particularly in relations with the EU.

More important to the EU than his communist coloring is Mr. Christofias's commitment to reach out to the estranged Turkish Cypriot community to explore how to reunite the island. Cyprus's 65 years old division is an irritant to the EU and a main obstacle to Turkey's hopes of joining the bloc.

He, in all occasions sent the same message of friendship to Turkish Cypriots, to reunite the island of Cyprus without foreign intervention. He is committed to reviving talks to re-unify Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus, although he has so far avoided giving details of how a peace settlement might be reached.¹

Results of the elections held on Feb 17 for the first round and Feb 24, the second in the southern part of Cyprus may lead to a new era in Cyprus Dispute. It seems that the majority of the Greek Cypriots thought the second round may open up a possibility for a new initiative to reunify the island and this could be read as a positive development in the Greek Cypriot side. It is quite obvious that if the incumbent Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos was re-elected, there would no real change in the current situation and the future of the island still would be foggy.

The very fresh Greek Cypriot president Demetris Christofias of the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), in his speeches at various meetings and rallies, has said that he and his party believe in a “bi-communal, bi-zonal federation based on political equality” and that, if elected, he will solve the Cyprus problem in the shortest time possible.

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Still standing resolutions blocking the peace

On March 6, 1966, the Haravgi newspaper (AKEL's mouthpiece) reported the proceedings of AKEL's 11th congress in banner headlines. According to the paper, the congress was taking historic decisions on the furtherance of the “Greek Cypriot anti-imperialist struggle.”

The historic decisions concerning Cyprus announced on March 12 and published in Haravgi on March 13, 1966 were as follows:

“The congress reaffirms AKEL's persistent and unchanging attitude in our liberation struggle. It further reiterates AKEL's efforts aimed at a non-aligned independence, the ultimate territorial integrity of Cyprus and the removal of all foreign bases and radio stations that are used for spying. It is only after the realization of these objectives that the people of Cyprus will be able to determine their future through the internationally accepted principle of self-determination, free from foreign intervention and pressure. Only within this concept will our people achieve national rehabilitation with its free will and conscience, without any pressure or blackmail. Those NATO forces that oppose our policy are taking advantage of the nationalistic feelings of the people and issuing disseminating propaganda of a direct [union of Cyprus and Greece (enosis)] through a fait accompli. Our party is resolutely opposed to such enosis. Because through this kind of enosis an unacceptable NATO solution will be imposed on our people ... that will in fact amount to the partitioning of Cyprus from Greece and its linking with NATO.

The congress, having in mind these efforts of imperialists and NATO forces, calls on our people to be vigilant, to foil these plots aimed at the oppression and enslavement of Cyprus.

While the congress approves non-aligned independence, full sovereignty and the policy of self-determination, it maintains that this policy serves the national interests of our national struggle and, in general, world peace in its full meaning. It sees the struggle as the only right policy and the real anti-imperialist national liberation movement and, while it approves this stand, it urges the party to continue to play a leading role in this struggle as it has done, without deviation and to do its utmost with all its strength.”²

One day before this resolution was adopted by the 11th congress, the text of a letter addressed to President Makarios by former Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou, dated Aug. 29, 1964, was published in the Greek Cypriot press. There is a close relationship between this letter and the slogan of “Unfettered independence, unconditional independence and genuine independence.”

Passages from Makarios' reply to Papandreou also shed light on their links with enosis, as indicated below. All Greek Cypriot papers carried the following quotation from George Papandreou on March 3, 1966, attributing it to the Athens-based Ethnos newspaper: "Shortly the Turkish troops in Cyprus will be rotated. We feel it necessary to announce our joint decisions on the new crisis created by this development.

We have reached agreement to have recourse to the United Nations for unconditional independence, which provides for the exercise of the right of self-determination.

We have further agreed to maintain peace in the island until the UN adopts a resolution. We shall not provoke, but rather we will launch a peace offensive, promising general amnesty to Turkish Cypriots. We shall tell them that we will safeguard their human and political rights. With this approach we will foil the aggressive intentions of the Turks and create favorable impressions at the United Nations.

Turks can be expected to attack without provocation. But, as I said, in the event of such an offensive Greece will defend Cyprus with all her strength. As the Greek army cannot possibly fight under the banner of "unfettered independence," the parliaments of Greece and Cyprus will proclaim enosis immediately and the fighting will take place under the banner of enosis. This is a banner suitable for a nation to fight for."

Greek Cypriot Parliament's 26 June 1967 enosis resolution (which has not been withdrawn yet), confirming that, despite adverse consequences, it would not suspend the struggle for union with Greece, being conducted with the support of all Greeks; and Law No. 48 of 1987 of the same parliament which accorded legal recognition to the "national struggle" (enosis) and its organization (EOKA)³.

The Greek Cypriot House of Representatives' resolution dated 26 June 1967, on Enosis (union of Cyprus with Greece), has neither been annulled nor denied by the Greek Cypriot side until today. It is still in force.⁴

The resolution adopted by the Greek Cypriot parliament on 26 June 1967 is as follows:

Interpreting the age-long aspirations of the Greeks of Cyprus, the House declares that despite any adverse consequences it would not suspend the struggle being conducted with the support of all Greeks, until the struggle ends in success through the union of the whole and undivided Cyprus with the motherland, without any intermediary stage.⁵

The resolutions of 1966 and 1967, are still valid and not yet cancelled.

How close the solution

It is quite wondering how Mr. Hristofias will settle the Cyprus dispute based on "bi-communal, bi-zonal federation based on political equality" while the above resolutions are directing him to enosis⁶.

AKEL also did not object to the declaration of the “Cypriot Hellenic Republic” on July 16, 1974 by coup d'état-installed President Nikos Sampson, the notorious killer of innocent Turkish Cypriot civilians.

Actually the “Cold War” is over, and the newly elected Greek Cypriot president Mr. D.Christofias isn't like the old horses of the once glorious communist world. Actually the 61-year-old leader was educated in Moscow and sympathizes with the Russians, but he doesn't want to challenge the European Union or the Western world or to ruin Greek Cyprus's prosperity.

AKEL, one of the very few still existing political parties in the world has been arguing since the very beginning that Turkish and the Greek Cypriots should live together on the island peacefully.

Although Christofias was among the opponents of the Annan plan before the 2004 referendum on it, he saw that things were moving in the direction of partition. So he argued for a united Cyprus in his recent election campaign. After his official victory, he extended his hand to the Turkish side and said that he would restart the peace process.

Compared to his predecessor Tassos Papadopoulos, Christofias is clearly more willing to find a solution.

What's more, for many years now, AKEL™ has kept contact with the leftist Republican Turkish Party (CTP) party in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and president Dimitris Christofias and TRNC President Mehmet Ali Talat have a good dialogue.

Chances for a solution

These are important advantages for starting new negotiations, but how much will the chances for a solution rise under Christofias?

The AKEL leader is always talking about a solution, but of course this must have a particular meaning for him.

From his campaign speeches, this is what he aims at: a federation with two regions and two nations will be established on Cyprus, political equality will be established between the two sides on the basis of resolutions of the UN Security Council, and foreign military forces (i.e. Turkish soldiers) will withdraw.

Of course these are the general conditions put forth as the starting position in the election atmosphere. When a dialogue is established and the negotiations actually start, obviously there will be some flexibility on these positions and mutual concessions will be made.

What's important for fruitful negotiations is the wish and will of the two leaders to start a new process. Papadopoulos lacked of this and locked up the entire possible means heading to a fruitful negotiation.

Relevant institutions and countries, like UN, USA and EU are now ready to step in. After the first contacts held within months the parameters and details of the actual negotiations be determined.

The goal of this new process is to reach an agreement on the basis of a "united Cyprus." Actually this is what Turkish Cypriots wanted since 2004, despite certain frustrations they have experienced.

The chances for new steps have risen with this new presidency in the Greek Cypriot administration. The two sides are hopeful now. But as Talat said, "it would be good if this window of opportunity opens horizons towards a solution. Otherwise unification will remain a mere dream".

The Greek Cypriot president Mr. Christofias seems slightly reluctant to sit at the negotiating table with the Turkish Cypriot President Mehmet Ali Talat, for negotiations within the UN parameters.

It seems to most of the Cypriots, both Turkish and Greek, and to related parties that it's high time to work for a solution to the Cyprus problem based on the political equality of the two sides and that the new Greek Cypriot president should embark immediately on launching the negotiations process with the Turkish Cypriot President Mr. Mehmet Ali Talat.

The election of Mr. Christofias as the 6.th president of the Greek Cypriots is a reflection of the will of the Greek Cypriot people. Most of the Cypriots, both Turkish and Greek, and the related parties hope that Mr. Christofias will replace Mr Papadopoulos' intransigent policy with one of a pro-solution strategy.

It is quite obvious that Mr. Christofias has been a coalition partner with the party of the outgoing leader Papadopoulos DIKO; and that it has now become clear that the new leader will be maintaining a coalition government with its old partners, including DIKO. This means a dead lock on the roads leading towards a solution on the Cyprus issue.

Mr Christofias, the Leader of AKEL and the Greek Cypriot President has strongly criticized in the past the intransigence of Papadopoulos before and during the election campaign.

It is clearly obvious that Cyprus cannot afford to waste more time once again and the Greek Cypriot president Mr. Dimitris Christofias should meet with Turkish Cypriot President Mehmet Ali Talat to re-launch and speed up the negotiations process within the UN parameters and initiatives, in the shortest time possible⁷.

Turkish Cypriot President Mehmet Ali Talat has stated that the Cyprus problem could be solved in the period ahead within the framework of the UN parameters⁸ and a

future solution should be based on the political equality of the two sides and two founding states.

He also held a press conference during which he called on the new Greek Cypriot President to resume negotiations as soon as possible to bring about a solution to the Cyprus problem and to reunite the island. He pointed out that the Greek Cypriot people voted in favor of change and expressed his hope that the elections will start a new period in Cyprus⁹.

UN and the negotiations

President Talat called on Greek Cypriot President to co-operate in the process of negotiations, to start as soon as possible, believing that the Cyprus problem could be solved within the UN parameters based on the political equality of the two peoples and the equal status of two constituent states.

Turkish side insists on solving the Cyprus problem on the bases of two constituent states with equal status and two peoples, namely Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, bearing political equality. Drawing attention to the fact that the solution of the Cyprus problem will lead to the setting up of a partnership state, the President Talat underlined the importance of the establishment of a new partnership state which will be approved by the two peoples of the island in a referendum.

Concerning the 2004 Referenda on the UN Peace Plan in Cyprus, Turkish Cypriot Side had voted in favor of the peace plan while the Greek Cypriot Side had changed its mind at the last minute and rejected the plan. The 2004 UN peace blueprint, known as the Annan plan, was backed by the Turkish Cypriots although they were left out in the cold when Greek Cyprus, represented internationally by the Greek Cypriots, entered the EU as a divided island, a week later.

With the nonstop support coming from mainland Turkey, the world perspectives of Turkish Cypriot's have changed remarkably. They have overcome the economic dire straits and improved political and economic relations with other countries. Greece and Cypriot Greeks, closely watching Turkish Cypriots, were disturbed by the developments taking place in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, TRNC.

President Talat relying on this historical fact stressed that the period ahead will not be a period for image making and it won't be a right manner first to say that "we are ready to accept" but then to reject with a NO campaign". Such a move definitely would cement the division of the island.

The UN, jaded by repeated failures, is now due to back another drive to clinch a Cyprus settlement after four years of stalemate. A senior UN mission may visit the island to test the waters.¹⁰

The Kosovo factor

As Greece and South Cyprus fume over the recognition of Kosovo's independence declared on Feb. 17, 2008, Russian President Vladimir Putin raised the question "Northern Cyprus has been independent for 40 years, why don't you recognize it?"

Apparently, conditions are improving in favor of the TRNC. In other words, Turkish Cypriots endured any difficulties for years; therefore, they have to make good use of this opportunity.

With all its constitutional bodies, the TRNC has adopted a democratic structure for over 40 years. Greek Cypriots tortured Turkish Cypriots. And the book titled "The Forgotten Cost" having plenty of historical documents inside reveals the incidents of the past.

Regrettably, however, no state but Turkey has recognized the independence of TRNC because of the double standards. The European Union and U.S., in particular, stand against it.

Time will tell if Cypriot Greeks will seek the Enosis, Megali Idea, or if the peace process on the island is concluded as was in Kosovo?¹¹

There are countries opposed to Kosovo's independence, for they believe Kosovo might set a precedent for Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. But such objections have something to do with the targets they set in the Balkans. And that gives the Turkish Cypriot President Mr. Mehmet Ali Talat an upper hand.

How the period ahead was going to be shaped will depend on the Greek Cypriot Side's stance more than Turkish Cypriot.

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