

Papadopoulos Has Saved Us from Our Complex

Mehmet Ali Birand

In order to evaluate, from the point of view of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, the point where we stand today, we have to go back a little.

Although by reviewing without prejudice and fanatical nationalism the situation for the Turks, and by stressing Turkish intellectual's and elite's points of view, I can summarise it in a sentence, **'Disappointment, furthermore betrayal.'**

The Turks have considered that the events that took place before 1974 were the endeavours of the Greeks to throw them out of the island, or at least make them totally ineffective and by this route, annexing the island with Greece. In my belief this bears a great deal of truth. In the years of EOKA these intentions were bluntly exercised and repeated many times. The attacks organised on the Turkish villages were concrete indications of this. The coup d'etat led by Sampson, which was backed by the Greek Junta, was the final drop. If we take into consideration the international conjecture; what was going on both in Cyprus and Greece, and the strategic balance in the Aegean during that time, we can easily understand that other than intervention, there was no alternative option for whoever was in power in Turkey.

It cannot be denied that not only in Turkey or in the opinion of the international public but also among certain circles of Greeks and Greek Cypriots, the common opinion is that **'The most important element which forced Turkey's military intervention was the Greek Junta.'**

As the years passed by after military intervention, although possibilities for a solution arose on many occasions, a solution was not reached, and in time everything started to change.

Faith in **'justness'** among the Turkish communities gradually began to fade away. The belief slowly gained strength that the real intention of the governments both in Turkey and *TRNC* was not to solve the problem but to settle in the north. The balance in the Aegean changed in the 1980s following the accession of Greece to the EU. The deterrence of the Turkish military dominance was not present any longer. For this reason Ankara began to view Cyprus as her **hostage**.

As time went by, however, it became apparent that this kind of approach was not viable. On the one hand there was Turkey's vision for accession to the EU. On the other hand the basic prospect of the Cyprus problem had been changed by the dissolution of the USSR and the end of the cold war. In Turkish communities, amidst influential circles, Cyprus was no longer considered to be a strategic necessity. It had become a humanitarian issue and the cost of not being able to resolve the Cyprus problem increased.

During this period the desire for a solution gained power within Turkish public opinion. I very clearly remember when the Greek Cypriots demonstrated saying, **"We desire to live together with Turkish Cypriots and share this island with them."** At that time there was support from the international fora that deemed this to be 'right'. Every national and international parliament stood poised to help in any way and the Turkish side was excoriated. In the world media Turkey was portrayed as a monster who wanted to swallow up an innocent island. At international conferences it was impossible to respond to the Greek Cypriots' justifications. Certain sections of the Turkish community when observing this course did, amongst themselves and sometimes openly, admit that the Greek Cypriots had justified points. The criticism levelled at the Turkish side which was against a solution, intensified to such a high degree that a complex was almost felt.

Rauf Denktash was now viewed as a symbol of 'no-solution' and came under harsh severe criticism. Denktash the hero, who was once carried shoulder-high, started to be pressurised.

The AKP's rise to power was the turning point. If the coalition government of Ecevit-Bahçeli-Yıldırım had remained in office, it would not have stepped back from its current stance *even* though the process of securing a date to begin negotiations with the EU might have been endangered. The AKP took a great deal of risk and succeeded in breaking a taboo. Despite the military and conservative officials, they accepted the Annan Plan.

The conservatives in Ankara were creating a far greater problem than the Greek Cypriots for the pro-solution sectors within the Turkish communities.

Could the Annan Plan bring an ideal solution?

No. It was acknowledged that these kinds of solutions cannot be measured by any means of scale and the Turkish side was, therefore, encouraged to be flexible and make concessions.

So this was the climate during the 24 April referenda.

The result has mostly shocked the people who for years believed that what was being said by the Greek Cypriots was sincere and true. They now feel betrayed. Today, the people who were criticising Denktash when he exclaimed "**The Greek Cypriots are lying don't believe them. They don't want a solution, they want the whole island**", are granting him a right.

Papadopoulos, and especially AKEL with their policies, preferred risky politics. After securing full EU membership they have come to realise that they will not suffer any further losses other than the Annan Plan itself. They thought that they might achieve further new concessions from Turkey who also wishes to be a member of the EU, but they did not wish to be known as the leaders who gave up the North. They estimated that by spreading the solution process, they might in time be able to achieve new ratifications in the Annan Plan. Furthermore, there would be no change in their present status - while being rich, they might become even wealthier. No-one would be able to apply force after their seats had been secured within the EU mechanism and they could prevent the isolations imposed upon the Turkish Cypriots being lifted. For the time being it seems that some of these estimations have come true.

The Turks (especially those who were supporting the solution) now taste the flavour of betrayal. They have not received the responses they expected from either the EU or the UN. As the time passes their impression grows stronger that what has been said by the Greek Cypriots in the past has not been sincere or true, and that the actual will of the Greek Cypriots is not to share the island. And, for the Greek Cypriots, the biggest danger starts from this point on.

FROM NOW ON THE UNIFICATION OF THE ISLAND IS VERY MUCH HARDER

Although one must be in the field of fortune-telling to make predictions about what lies ahead, we can discuss the important changes within the Turkish communities which will impact on future developments likely to arise.

If we evaluate the results of the referenda only from Turkey's point of view, we can easily see that both the governments of Turkey and *TRNC* have benefited.

- The unsettlement has postponed all the major problems which might have arisen in the case of a solution, especially the problematic issues concerning the refugees who would have been dislocated. The functioning of the newly established state would have brought new significant problems, but they have rid themselves of these problems.
- Pulling the military out of the island might have created new tensions both in *TRNC* and Turkey between the AKP and in conservative circles.

Furthermore this might have evolved into big political crises.

- The unwanted events that might have been created by fanatics on both sides who would have used the advantages of rapprochement have been prevented.
- The pressure put on Turkey by the international community and the political arena has been lifted. Turkey has rid itself of this burden without forsaking anything. The Greek Cypriots have lost their plausibility.
- Bearing in mind that in midterm the embargoes imposed on *TRNC* in one way or another will be less and the Turkish private companies will be able to invest more easily and light-heartedly in the North, we could say that the losses of the Turkish Cypriots would decline to a lesser extent.

What can clearly be seen from this perspective, and the most common evaluation being made by the Turkish Cypriots, is that following the referenda, Cyprus has been divided forever and can no longer be unified. From now on whatever kind of government takes office in Turkey, it will be unable to secure the support that the Annan Plan received. Whatever the plan - Annan Plan or another plan in a different name which might be proposed - it is not foreseen to bring about the unification of Turks and Greeks.

If the Greek Cypriot leadership is predicting that "**When Turkey comes to the point of full EU membership we could get what we want**", we can immediately confirm that they are very wrong. Turkey could agree on some minor changes to the old Annan Plan, but these would not go beyond "**cosmetics**". I could have imagined almost anything, but I would never have conceived how closed Papadopoulos' and Denktash's basical approaches could be. One wants the annexation of the North with Turkey and the other one wants to control the whole island.

In this whole struggle we have suffered so much. We are the really disappointed ones who are living with the taste of betrayal. The moderates have lost instead of the marginals.

NB. The English translation of Mr Birand's text has been provided
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