

# **Embracing Cyprus - the Path to Unity in the New Europe**

**Pauline Green (with Ray Collins) Forward: Rt. Hon. Robin Cook**

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By all standards, Pauline Green has been a champion of Cyprus's European cause during the 1990s, that is the most interesting, fascinating, promising, but also crucial and full of uncertainties, period of EU-Cyprus relations. Empowered by her North London Cypriot constituency, Pauline Green advanced Cyprus's European perspective at home and abroad with vivacity and political professionalism. Leader of the Parliamentary Group of European Socialists for five consecutive years (1994-95), this book necessarily reflects her political experience in European and British/London politics. This experience is linked to the challenges she faced over the Cyprus issue, the ways in which she pushed forward Cyprus's European dream and the mode of policy conduct in various corridors of power, particularly in Ankara and Brussels/Strasbourg. She was embittered many times by Turks, Greeks and Europeans alike. But she never gave up. Cyprus has always belonged to Europe, it has been part and parcel of modern European politics and it is a European issue anyway. For Pauline, the way forward was and is Cyprus's entry into the EU with or without a solution.

But Paulina's book does not only register her political experience. Her account offers some very useful reflections and speculative analyses regarding Cyprus geo-political position in the Eastern Mediterranean, the way forward for Greek-Turkish relations and the subtle balance of interests between America and Europe in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In essence, Pauline concedes that Cyprus has to walk on a tightrope, a thin diplomatic wire within the framework established by the UN and the EU. In the end, both America and the UK will come along with Europe and the UN, not least because, so Pauline asserts and establishes, a united Cyprus within the EU serves the national interests of both oceanic powers in the region. 'The path to unity in the new Europe', is the path of peace and prosperity for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots and of all other regional and global actors. A solution to the division of the island within the EU will act as a catalyst for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, will bring a permanent understanding between Turkey and Greece (two NATO powers) over their Aegean controversy and, last but not least, will solidify Turkey's European vocation once and for all.

Paulina's approach to EU-Cyprus relations has been unequivocal throughout.

Cyprus's entry to the EU would foster a solution to the problem and that these two processes would run in parallel and under the auspices of the UN. Thus, she was in a position to counter successfully two strong arguments: the first was that Cyprus must be refused entry until 'either Turkey joined the EU at the same time, or until a solution to the Cyprus problem had been found' (p. 9). But these implied either a continuation of the *status quo* on Cyprus or a surrendering of Cyprus to Turkey's progress in its relations with the EU. But the Republic of Cyprus is an independent state, whose Northern zone is under military occupation by Turkey. The international community has been very generous to Turkey and Denktash's Turkish Cypriot regime - witness the signing of a customs union agreement between the EU and Turkey and the aid the EU is providing for the Cypriot occupied zone. The matter of *recognition*, however, is wholly different. It is a *political* matter and has to do with a *political decision* to be taken at the level of the UN. As things stood during and after the Republic's application to join the EU in the 1990s, Turkey had no legal grounds whatsoever to object or obstruct the process. But Turkey stubbornly refused to work on this basis, and when Tony Blair and Robin Cook brokered an invitation to be extended to the Turkish Cypriot community to take part in the negotiation process, Denktash turned the invitation down. He insisted that no negotiations should start unless Turkey's EU membership itself is placed on an equal footing.

But Turkey's geo-strategic value after the Cold War has substantially increased, and America needs Turkey in order to advance deeper into Central Asia and the Middle Eastern region. Any decision by the Turkish military to hold its ground in Cyprus despite EU-UN insistence is related to this strategic rationale. Although Pauline is not in a position to discuss the changing strategic value of Turkey in US political considerations after the war in Iraq (the book was completed before the war), the fact remains that Anatolia's plateau as a real estate has an extremely important strategic value, not least because of the oil and gas pipelines projects under construction or consideration. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, undertaken by the BP, also underscores the importance of Northern occupied Cyprus, as the port of Ceyhan is right opposite the Karpass peninsula of the island. One of the maps that accompanied Kofi Annan's first plan (11 November 2002) was suggesting that the Karpass could be handed over to Greek Cypriots. But that was so difficult for the Turkish military to digest, inasmuch as the Karpass serves Turkey's defence planning also in its confrontation with Syria over the Hatay province (Alexandretta).

Turkey, Pauline insists, must understand that Cyprus will join the EU and that the process of its accession is irreversible. But then 'Cyprus, as a united country, could present a Turkish bridgehead into the EU. If intelligently argued, the conditions applicable to the Turkish Cypriot community could offer some important precedents for language, religion and culture which could facilitate the discussions with Turkey

itself' (p. 132). This is the real challenge for Turkey, particularly after her ill-conceived tactics not to offer the facilities the Americans needed to topple Saddam's regime. Now, America has realised that the '(greater) Middle East can be transformed' even without Turkey's help, which means that Turkey's geo-strategic value does not run as high as it used to. I am sure that the book will have a second edition, so that both Pauline and Ray will be in a position to discuss Cyprus in relation to Turkey's Middle Eastern posture after the Iraqi crisis.

*Embracing Cyprus* is a highly readable book written by a charismatic protagonist of the events that marked Cyprus's European Union membership. It should be translated immediately into Turkish and Greek, thus becoming accessible to all, because it is a book that challenges the half-truths that so many of us have held dear.

**Vassilis K Fouskas**