

Welcoming address by Andreas Theophanous at the
launching of the Policy Paper 2/2010 November

**MUST HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF BY DUPLICATING EARLIER
MISTAKES IN THE 60-YEAR LONG NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT
CYPRUS'S FUTURE?**

by Claire Palley

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Welcoming Address

Your Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with pleasure that I welcome you to the launching of the second policy paper of the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs. The paper by Claire Palley entitled "*Must history repeat itself by duplicating earlier mistakes in the 60-year long negotiations about Cyprus' future?*" was finalized in the latter part of 2009 at a time when there was domestic and international pressure for a fast and fruitful outcome in the negotiations between President Christofias and the (then) Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat.

In fact not very different from the context we saw being suggested a few days ago, twelve months after this paper was finalised. It is therefore very important and we are indeed very fortunate that we have the opportunity to study the remarkable insight Claire Palley provides, ahead of yet another push expected in a few weeks time.

Palley acknowledges the significance of timing but wisely stresses that it is the substance of the issues being negotiated which is the decisive factor. Palley also put forward the view that if Christofias and Talat had not come to a conclusive arrangement this would not have been the end of the world as negotiations could still go on even with Dervis Eroglu. The logic is that if Turkey for its own objectives decides that the time has come for major decisions and

concessions to persuade the majority of Greek Cypriots that at last there is an opportunity for a breakthrough, the Turkish Cypriots will follow accordingly. It was never considered difficult for Turkey to “persuade” any Turkish Cypriot leader to follow its own policies.

Much has been said about what is being described as a solution “of the Cypriots by the Cypriots”. And inevitably both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots must take initiatives to promote a common future. On the other hand, as Palley stresses it is essential to realize that external players have a major role to play. In the case of Turkey this role is critical.

Equally critical according to Palley is that a comprehensive agreement should have a good chance of being functional and sustainable. This means that such a framework should entail the conditions for cooperation, creativity and security. Moreover, both sides must feel that they have a strong stake in what has been agreed. This may be the only way for the new state of affairs to acquire legitimacy.

The Cyprus question is a complex issue and, not surprisingly, generations of diplomats and analysts frustratingly have described it as intractable. Despite frequent pessimistic assessments it will be essential to continue the efforts, Palley correctly believes.

But in the meantime it has been the consistent policy of Turkey to “delegitimize” the Republic of Cyprus. Everything that it has done since 1974 aims at legitimizing the fundamentals of the *status quo*

and the results of its invasion, which, crucially, was described at the time as an attempt “to reestablish the constitutional order”. Ankara now insists on a new partnership of two equal constituent states which will create a very loose federation. Such an arrangement would put aside the Republic of Cyprus. No major decisions will be taken without Turkish (Cypriot) participation/consent. In essence this would require double majorities. On top of this Ankara aims to maintain its own guarantees in the set-up to emerge. Even if there are territorial concessions it is very doubtful whether the overall arrangement would constitute an improvement for the Greek Cypriots.

I will leave you with these very basic thoughts but before I hand over the floor to our distinguished guest, I wish to thank Mrs Palley for our cooperation, for her meticulous study, for her thoroughness and for her enviable clarity of thought.

Thank you very much!