

CYPRUS PROBLEM: THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

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In 1977, the bizonal, bicomunal federation has been agreed as the historical compromise of the two communities. Since then we have had successive rounds of negotiations that until today have not led, unfortunately, to the desired outcome.

Right after Christofias' election, the basis for the negotiations was reaffirmed through the two common statements between the leaders of the two communities. As a next step, Working Groups and Technical Committees were formed, aiming to prepare the ground for the direct talks among the leaders of the two communities. Indeed, the direct talks commenced - in September 2008 and can be divided in two main periods.

For as long as Mr. Talat was in the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community, despite several difficulties that prevented the attainment of the progress we most wanted, significant convergences on three chapters were achieved: on Governance and Power Sharing, Economy and the European Union matters. Whilst, on the remaining three chapters (property, territory and security issues) there was no significant progress.

When Mr. Eroglou was elected as the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, in April of 2012, the situation drastically changed. The UN Secretary- General himself, in a meeting with the two leaders, asked for the reaffirmation of the basis of the negotiations and their continuation from where we left off with Talat. Mr. Eroglou replied in a rather vague manner on the agreed basis of the negotiations and renounced the substantial convergences he personally disliked.

I would like to mention only some typical examples. We agreed that as to the critical issue of the executive, the Greek Cypriot side would accept a presidential system with rotating presidency, whereas the Turkish Cypriot side would accept the cross voting and weighted vote. Mr. Eroglou though, chose from the package solely what he preferred which is the rotating presidency and obstinately denies the cross voting. The same has happened in relation to a series of other significant convergences. Against this background, the negotiations could not progress and finally Mr. Eroglou terminated the talks on the substantial aspects, and only raised issues of the daily life.

Under the conditions described above we arrived at the presidential elections of February that were won by Mr. Anastasiades. His election though, coincided with the devastating consequences on the economy, following Eurogroup's decisions. Under those circumstances, it was expected that the effort to resume negotiations would take place around

autumn. However, some pre- election positions of Mr. Anastasiades cause much concern, though it is fair to wait for his actions to judge him. In any event, if the basis of the negotiations that has been agreed long ago and the achieved convergences are not respected in concrete terms, we cannot be optimistic.

At this point I would like to express my views on the issue of hydrocarbons. I am persuaded, that with adequate and prudent management the hydrocarbons can turn out to be a serious motive for the solution. What should not be disregarded is the mere fact that the related convergences achieved with Mr. Talat, leave only few details for further regulation after the solution of the Cyprus problem. And this is because, it is agreed that all the maritime zones fall under the responsibility of the federal government. Additionally, it has been decided that the delimitation with neighbouring states and the resolution of disputes will also be a federal responsibility. Furthermore, natural resources are included among the federal competences (hence the hydrocarbons as well) and we succeeded to agree as to the allocation of the federal government revenues, including subsequently any income from the hydrocarbons. None of those should disappear.

However, what merits attention is that Mr. Eroglou, in concluding the "delimitation agreement" with Turkey, in essence, has questioned what had previously been agreed with Mr. Talat- as just described. Two are the noteworthy points in that "agreement": Firstly, that it "delimits" a continental shelf and not Economic Exclusive Zone. And secondly, that it offers almost the entire continental shelf to Turkey leaving to the "TRNC" only something more than the territorial waters.

In any case, the natural resources of the island, including hydrocarbons, constitute a common heritage of all Cypriots; hence, our Turkish Cypriot compatriots should be convinced that within the framework of a solution they will also enjoy the benefits of that so valuable good. On our turn, we also have an equally strong motive, since we very well know that stability is an absolutely necessary factor for success in such occasions.