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CYPRUS — "THE *STATUS QUO* IS UNACCEPTABLE"

President George Bush's call on August 2, 1991 for an international conference on Cyprus exploded like a diplomatic bomb in Athens, Ankara, and Nicosia. "The status quo is unacceptable" George Bush told the Greek people, repeating what every Greek politician has been saying since 1974. Hope for a political solution has been rekindled in the official government circles in Athens, Nicosia, and the centers of diaspora. "Washington is interested"; "diplomatic movement"; and "a trajectory for the solution of the Cyprus problem" are the pronouncements in official circles and the headlines in the pro-government and conservative media.

The opposition forces and media throughout the same Greek world are raising the banners of "doubt" and "entrapment" in the United States diplomatic moves. "A Questionable Conference" reads a headline, referring to the projected four-way conference between Greece, Turkey, and the two ethnic communities in Cyprus. "Turkey remains irreconcilable" reads another headline, referring to the key issues. "Only Turkey will decide who will sit at the negotiating table" says the opposition media. The messages coming are clear: the Turkish Cypriots will control 25 to 30% of the territory; the 18% Turkish Cypriots will negotiate with the 80% Greek Cypriots as equal representatives; and the Turkish military forces, we are told, will stay on the island. Ozal is acting like Shamir.

The next few weeks will determine whether a conference will take place and its format. There will be a great deal of maneuvering for position, behind-the-scene pressures and counterpressures, accusations and counter-accusations, threats and counter-threats, and most importantly, the fears and anxieties of what will happen the day after the diplomatic "roller coaster" ends, with or without a conference and a political solution in the near future. At the moment, no one seems to have the crystal ball to predict the outcome of these diplomatic maneuvers.

In these latest diplomatic maneuvers, the immigrants in the United States have been called once again to do their part. This is not the first time. There were many such calls, and each time the call for struggle and the promise of victory turned into disappointment and defeat. Is this another such call?

What follows here is the experience of immigrants who followed the events in Cyprus since the early 1950's. It is a view from diaspora. Here in America, the "land of the free and the home of the brave", the immigrant did his best to respond to the cause of Cyprus. In these renewed calls for struggle, the activist-immigrant had to confront himself/herself and shed certain illusions about the American political process and foreign policy objectives.

Most of the immigrants of the post-World War II period brought with them a conservative ideology, right-wing nationalism\*, reflecting the new world order imposed on Greece during the Civil War of 1946-49. Greece was now firmly in the American camp. The communists were defeated, thanks to the Americans. One problem remained: enosis (union of Cyprus with Greece). Many immigrants believed that enosis was just around the corner. Faith in the Greek Orthodox religion and the heroic struggles of the Hellenes, faith in the righteousness of our struggle for freedom and self-determination, faith in America, the savior of Greece from atheistic communism, and the representative of the free world convinced many immigrants that the British and Americans will see the light one day and support the union of Cyprus with Greece. This was the mood of the 1950 referendum for enosis and the early attempts to bring the Cyprus problem before the United Nations and the world community. Over time, however, reality surfaced and the abstract and superficial nationalistic ideology began to loosen up. Nonetheless, this ideological attitude remained, for the most part, manichean well into the 1960's. Nationalists divided the world between the forces of good and evil, between good guys and bad guys, between "free Americans" and "slave communist Russians".

While we were convinced of our just struggle, we had to convince others as well. Riding on the wave of anti-colonialism after World War II, we readily had the support of the nonaligned countries and the governments of Eastern Europe. All we had to do was to convince the British and the Americans. Turkey was not included in our calculations.

The anti-British, anti-colonial sentiment among the Greek immigrants inflamed their nationalist pride. Many attended the United Nations and listened to the great debates in the early 1950's. We won, at least we thought we won, many speech "battles". We appealed to the conscience of humanity, for freedom, justice, and self-determination. At times we were a little disap-

\* In our village (Flassou, Solea) we were the "kekko" (right-wing) family, proud of father's internment for a few days by the British colonial authorities in the 1931 uprising.

pointed that our official representatives were not the new Solons. We thought that if our representatives were better orators, everyone, including our enemies, would be convinced of our moral and just cause. We demonstrated in the streets and distributed leaflets to anyone who would take one. We knew everything about our just struggle and wanted *them* to know too. We wanted every open and fairminded person to understand us and to convince his or her political representative in Washington to support us. We marched up and down the streets, children, men, women, grandparents with canes. We shouted for freedom, for self-determination, for enosis, mostly to ourselves. And then we rushed home to see if we made the news. We had to do it. We had to be on the move, whenever our leaders called on us and the Cyprus problem was to be placed on the United Nations agenda. Such innocence, how little did we know that the United Nations officials or the people we were appealing to in the streets or the liberals in Congress could not help themselves, much less the few Cypriotes. Few Americans know where Cyprus is—let alone care.

The struggle continued year after year. Our leaders, the government officials, and the immigrant media sent the same message: continue the struggle, tremendous value is given to the struggle of the immigrants in the United States. We tried harder. We had to convince our American friends.

Immigrants followed the actions of our leaders in Athens and Nicosia. The friends of America and the West were in power. The Greek Premier Papagos captivated the Greek masses when he told the British that if Greeks got Cyprus, the British would get Greece. The British were amused. Their answer was "never". Papagos threatened, to bring the Cyprus problem before the United Nations. That did not work either, diplomacy failed.

The EOKA armed struggle in the mid-1950's, led by the right-wing leader Grivas, was intended to convince the British and their American supporters to be more conciliatory, to take us seriously. No sensible person expected the EOKA fighters to throw the British into the sea. The British and Americans were adamant, opposed to self-determination for Cyprus.

Greek immigrants glorified every EOKA attack against the British colonial system. The media in the United States branded EOKA as a "terrorist organization". That made us angry. We explained that EOKA fighters were neither terrorists nor communists. They were freedom fighters, just like the Hungarian freedom fighters in 1956. We tried to justify the EOKA violence as necessary for freedom and self-determination, and that Greeks are really friends and allies. Greeks fought on the side of the allies in the two world wars, whereas Turkey, the new player opposing Greek demands, was

not an ally or a true friend of the West. We declared that our British friends who ceded the Ionian islands to Greece in the 1860's ought to do the same with Cyprus. We appealed, in the name of justice and freedom, wrote letters, and demonstrated at the United Nations to convince the Americans, the leaders of the free world and the saviors of Greece from communism, to do the right thing for Cyprus. We were so convinced of the legitimacy of our cause that we assumed any sensible leader in the free world would understand and be on our side.

The EOKA armed struggle convinced the official circles in London and Washington to listen, but mostly to Turkey. They even came around to enosis as well, but double enosis with Greece and Turkey. The British colonialists, the grand masters of "divide and rule", did in Cyprus what they did in India, Palestine, and Ireland. In order to keep their grip on the strategic island after the loss of the Suez Canal in 1956, the British transformed an anti-colonial struggle into a feud between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus and a conflict between Greece and Turkey. By 1957 the British role was changed from treachery to peacemaking. Eventually, they secured two sovereign bases and dropped out of sight.

By 1959 the dream of enosis became a nightmare. Enosis was abandoned for the spirit of Zurich and London, giving birth to the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. The Republic of Cyprus was not the ideal solution. It was the most practical under the circumstances of continued colonialism or the threat of partition between Greece and Turkey. The constitutional framework was neither functional nor democratic. It represented the power equation favoring Turkey within the NATO alliance. The 18% Turkish Cypriot minority had equal power in the political process with the 80% Greek majority through the veto. Though American interests in Greece and Turkey were secured, the state apparatus they set up collapsed. The Greek-Turkish conflict, exacerbated during the EOKA period, was constitutionalized and made a permanent feature of the political process. Makarios offered the thirteen points proposals to make the constitution workable. Turkey rejected the proposals without discussion. The conflict escalated, with both sides arming themselves, leading to the intercommunal warfare of 1963-64. The stage of siege accelerated the process of partition. The Turkish Cypriots left the government to the Greeks and armed themselves into enclaves. Backed by Turkish military power, they had no reason to negotiate except under their terms: partition (taksim). The Greek Cypriots also adjusted to this new reality. They went about their business, the daily routines, sports and entertainment, work, and profits.

The crisis in Cyprus and the impotence of the Greek governments to

deal with it, their subservience to Western interests, coupled with the demands for democratization, led to the political confrontations between right and center in Greece from 1963 to 1967. The rightist forces were threatened by the mobilization of the masses. Their hegemony and the American/NATO hegemony over Greece was in crisis. This crisis impacted on Turkey as well. The military coup of April 21, 1967 was to end the popular mobilization and the threat to Western interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Most Greeks did not welcome the junta. Only a minority of fanatic right-wingers supported the new regime. It was imposed anyway. The United States government, which had a hand in the coup d'état, publicly criticized the lack of democracy in its birthplace and the violation of human rights, but gave the regime dollars and guns to stay in power. After all, the military regime was firmly pro-NATO, pro-West, and anti-communist. Greeks, we were told, needed discipline, law and order; they had become too anti-NATO and anti-American; they had too many demonstrations, they became too "anarchical" —a Greek word and political trait since ancient times! This anti-Anglo-Americanism of the Greek masses had to be stopped.

As the junta forces rounded up its enemies into torture chambers and concentration camps, the Greek masses again went back to their daily lives. Militant anti-fascists and "communists" were either in prison or in the underground. Most liberals and "democratic" conservatives put their faith once again in the American government and Congress to restore democracy in its birthplace.

"Democracy" was restored in Athens in 1974, after the military regime completed its mission: the partition of Cyprus. The machinations on Cyprus were carried on relentlessly by the Greek junta. The Western media already branded Makarios as the "Castro of the Mediterranean". From 1967 on the Greek Cypriot officer corps was transformed into an arm of the junta. The state apparatus was infiltrated by junta agents. The few junta supporters in Cyprus painted stones and walls with slogans: EOKA "B", Digenis (Grivas), and "Greece for Greek Christians". These agents, in the name of religion, enosis, and anti-communism proceeded to destroy Cyprus.

Opposition to the junta machinations in Cyprus was limited. People used to say, "The Cypriots are not like the mainland Greeks" (kalamarades). Fascism will not happen in Cyprus, repeating what George Papandreou was saying about the Greek masses before the junta came to power in 1967. The few who demonstrated in Nicosia against the junta on the April 21st anniversary were met by Greek army and intelligence officers, dressed in civilian clothes, and EOKA "B" followers. They attacked the demonstrators with

sticks and chains, while the Cypriot police stood by. EOKA "B" hooliganism, assassination attempts on Makarios, the bishops' crisis, and the Turkish Cypriot state of siege became the way of life in the late 1960's and early 1970's, thus paving the way for the permanent solution sought after 1974.

The few immigrants struggling against the junta could do very little. They made their regular demonstrations and speeches and appeals to Congress. With the passing of time, the few who remained in the movement were fighting among themselves as to which group had the "correct political line". The vast majority of immigrants went about their lives. The events in Greece and Cyprus were just coffeeshop talk.

The beginning of the end was signaled with the student/worker insurrection at the Athens Polytechnic in November 1973. The junta had to go, but not before it performed its last services to its big power patrons. The machinations in Cyprus escalated. Immigrants, and the masses in Greece and Cyprus, stood by watching these events unfold. The junta coup d'état in Nicosia was followed by the Turkish invasion and occupation of the northern part of Cyprus. Both events occurred, not because of the failure of diplomacy and getting the wrong signals by the junta leaders (similar to that in Bagdad between the United States Ambassador and Saddam Hussein), but because they served the strategic military and economic interests of the United States and the West. The restoration of democracy in Greece and the partition of Cyprus was "killing two birds with one stone".

The mainland Greeks were told to be proud that democracy was restored without "bloodshed". It was a sign of their political maturity. Henry Kissinger even had the gall to tell the Greek people to be grateful to Turkey for the restoration of democracy in Athens. It was just a small sacrifice for Greek democracy and the strengthening of Washington's strategic interests in Turkey and the Middle East. As the mainland Greeks became more and more pre-occupied with their own political struggles, the problem of Cyprus was ignored. Money poured into Cyprus from the United States to neutralize the refugee problem.

Cyprus would be occupied for the next seventeen years. We have been told many times that time is not on our side. It never was. The Turkification of the northern part of Cyprus is completed. The separation of the Greeks and Turks is a fact, with generations growing apart. The vast majority of Greeks have resigned themselves to this new reality. Apathy, sorrow, cynicism, and petty squabbles dominate. Adjustments and rationalizations emerged. Many began to idealize the pre-1974 period, when the economy was booming. Others were frightened back to the 1960-63 period, before the intercommunal<sup>1</sup>

fighting, even suggesting that the reform proposals of Makarios were a mistake. Still others went to the colonial times, wishing that the British never left Cyprus. A romantic yearning for the false security of the past seized many Cypriots. As Hegel wrote, "Minerva's owl begins to fly when the dusk is falling", that is, wisdom comes when it is too late.

Have we learned anything from this experience? "Normalcy" has once again returned to Cyprus. Personal security, a job, a business, the discotheque, soccer, the latest fashions, owning a Mercedes-BMW-Voyager, female tourists, consumerism, drugs, and violence are the current headlines. While the social problems are mounting, the secret deals of politicians and business men go on with no let up. Headlines on the national problem are received with cynicism and lack of interest. The business community, we are told, is doing better now than before the war and are looking forward to bigger profits with a settlement. Even refugees have settled down in business and in their new communities.

And now the latest headlines of "guarded optimism" and the forthcoming negotiations. Will the refugees go home? All the political leaders say the refugees must be able to go home. But many refugees know better. Some hope that when the "partition line" is redrawn, their home and plot of land will be on the Greek side of the border.

What are the chances of success in this latest round of diplomacy? We had many "up-and-down" calls. One recalls the "fireworks of victory" in Nicosia with the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 or the election of Andreas Papandreou in 1981 and the "left" turn in Greek politics. The renewed struggle for Cyprus in the 1980's was militant phrases and few deeds. Whether Greece was ruled by right-wing governments, centrist, or socialist, its dependency within the imperialist chain was never in doubt. Hence, the inability of the Greek governments to deal with the Cyprus problem. Greek leaders cannot bite the hand that feeds them.

It is now 1991. Seventeen years of struggles to find a solution produced no results. The United Nations has not produced a solution and cannot produce one now. The United Nations can only serve as a cover-up to legitimize a solution based on greater force (*force majeure*). Given the present international order and the balance of forces in the area, the United States (and Great Britain), can force a solution, at least not one which is unfavorable to Turkey. Mainland Greeks and the Greek Cypriots are expected to accept the lesser of two or three evils offered them: permanent partition and the

threat of annexation of the northern part of Cyprus by Turkey or compromise with the *fait accompli* (ta tetelesmena).

The democratic changes in Eastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Gulf War, and President Bush's trip to Greece and Turkey in July 1991 and the projected negotiations are the catalysts for the present diplomatic offensive and the latest moments of "guarded optimism" for a political solution. Should one expect a just and democratic solution in the near future? Every Cypriot leader said no to the *fait accompli*. All that is needed is for the United States to exert pressure on its "staunchest" ally Turkey to be more flexible. Immigrant politics have been reduced to that level, of raising money to elect pro-Greek politicians who will exert pressure on the White House to exert pressure on Turkey. We have been told that Greece's veto over Turkey's admission to the (European) Common Market is another "card" keeping pressure on Turkey. Also, the Gulf War strengthened the United Nations and the principles of justice and legitimacy.

The above factors may be important, but they will not produce a settlement. The primary factors are United States strategic considerations for hegemony in the Middle East: oil, Israel, and keeping the Soviet Union out. In this strategy, Turkey continues to be the favorite agent of the West. That is why the invasion and occupation of the northern part of Cyprus was tolerated for seventeen years. Witness the speed with which Kuwait was "liberated" for its oil and their diplomacy for Cyprus for seventeen years. Why the concern now?

The latest diplomatic hurdles will determine the nature of the future struggle. Thus far, diplomacy failed; there was a lot of propaganda and stalling for the partition to become irreversible. These have been the tactics of the Turkish leadership. All the conditions and demands by the Turkish leadership for a political solution to the Cyprus problem are indicative of the strategy to legitimize the conquest on the battlefield. The political solution promoted by the American mediator runs parallel to the Turkish position. Hence, these latest attempts may be the most serious diplomatic push to legitimize the illegal occupation of the northern part of Cyprus. The occupation needs the Greek Cypriot signature.

The diplomacy for the Greek Cypriot signature is conducted under the shadow of occupation and decades of intrigues and machinations. The march of democratic forces in the world and the new world order would have little effect on the Cyprus problem. Nor can the Greek Cypriots rely on the traditional anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic forces for moral and material support. They are on their own. The mainland Greeks and the immigrants are in



solidarity. But how much can these masses rely on the Greek political leadership which cannot survive without the continuous infusion of money from Europe and the United States? At the center of this diplomatic stage is the United States, with the same reactionary and militaristic forces in place. Turkey's strategic importance for these forces does not signal good news for Cyprus.

The Greek Cypriots have no choice but to face the present and the future. They have to rise above their principles and figure out where they want to go. Here I have dealt with some of the warning signals. We face a real problem, the continued occupation of the northern part of Cyprus. It will not go away. This historical sketch offers neither tragedy nor optimism. The Cypriot people are tired of the same seventeen year old speeches and promises. Conversations of this nature turns people off. The previous generations created a mess and left a legacy of numbness among the young men and women. What is needed is an end to the false promises and the mass apathy. The Greek Cypriots need to take a series of small steps which will enable them to become armed with ideas and a determination to be free.

The Greek Cypriot signature will depend on how important issues are addressed. At the center of these projected negotiations is the return of occupied land to Greeks for shared political power at the federal state level. The Turks of Cyprus demand control of 25 to 30 per cent of the territory, complete equality on the political level in the federal government, and Turkish military presence and the right to intervene for the protection of the Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriots, on the other hand, have insisted that the settlers from mainland Turkey that number into tens of thousands must leave, the refugees (Greeks and Turks) must have the right to go home if they want to, freedom of movement for all Cypriots, the establishment of a federal government which is functional and democratic, and the departure of Turkish military forces from Cyprus.

How can the two positions be reconciled? If the gap between the two positions is narrowing, one has to assume that there is a lot of "horse-trading" in the secret rooms of diplomacy. The details are being worked out. How important, for example, is the difference between 25% and 27% on the territorial division? How important is two or three ministries in the government if their function is to promote the interests of all Cypriots? If all the refugees were to go home, that would be important; if it is a matter of small percentages of refugees going home, it would not be a determining factor in the overall solution. These and other issues are important in the overall solution of the Cyprus problem and should not be cast on the side. To this writer, however, the Greek

Cypriot signature should not be affixed on any document which does not resolve some of the basic issues related to the future of Cyprus.

What is vital in any solution is the type of constitutional order which sets in motion forces which will cut the umbilical cords from Greece and Turkey. Any arrangements which permit Greece and Turkey to intervene in Cyprus, politically and militarily, is a guarantee for future trouble. Another vital issue is the setting of a political mechanism which permits a minority to permanently control the direction of a country. A minority veto power institutionalizes separatism along ethnic lines and constitutes a permanent source of conflict and confrontation. It also prevents inter-ethnic coalitions along economic and policy lines, which are necessary to soften the historical animosity between Greeks and Turks and build bridges for a common future. Furthermore, the territorial borders between the two communities must be allowed, in stages, to wither away as in any known federal system in the world. The Swiss people overcame many of these ethnic divisions through referenda in each canton until they became the law of the land. What is suggested here is not details, but the planting of the seeds of a democratic order which will overcome the hatred and separatism between the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus which accumulated over the years.

Such a political solution, one that enables the different ethnic groups of Cyprus to grow together under a common roof, merits the Greek Cypriot signature.

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