

Dreams fading over Cyprus

Wednesday 10 November 2010, by [Yavuz Baydar](#)

“The procedure used was a disgrace for the EP,” wrote Joost Lagendijk in this paper a couple of days ago, commenting on its scandalous decision to block further the Direct Trade Regulation (DTR), which was meant to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, as a means to facilitate a fair and speedy settlement on the island’s negotiating communities under the auspices of the United Nations.

It is, indeed. After months of political intrigue and single-minded lobbying, the Greek Cypriot side managed to persuade the majority of the Legal Affairs Committee (of the European Parliament) to vote for the peculiar position that the legal basis for the DTR was the Accession Treaty and not the Lisbon Treaty. It happened against the opposition of the Liberals and the Greens.

What happened beyond blocking facilitation for the settlement — and thus keeping alive the hopes of the Turk Cypriots that they would soon enough be liberated from Turkish hegemony and be part of the EU — was something that could only be explained by sheer stupidity: The Conservatives, acting mainly out of the barely disguised obsession that Turkey should be kept away from the EU accession process as long as possible, and the Socialists, possibly in their mechanical mindset to act in solidarity with their comrade, Dimitris Christofias, basically decided to curb the powers to the European Parliament given to them by the Lisbon Treaty. It is one of those rare cases in which politicians, so keen to enhance their legislative powers, shoot themselves on the foot.

Not stupidity, cynicism, others would say. It may very well be. The fact is, in the case of Cyprus, both walk hand in hand, in full support of each other.

On the other hand, it is understandable if the decision at the Legal Affairs Committee is one of those last nails in the coffin for the dreams of a settlement. “I am not at all surprised, but I think I have had enough,” said a friend of mine. A true liberal long involved in mediating the civilian dialogue process on the island, he elaborated on his frustration: “I witnessed this cynical behavior in Bosnia and Kosovo, and had hoped that Europeans who gave priority to the Christians and left Balkan Muslims more or less to their fate would be wise enough to draw lessons thereof. Alas, the same attitude is very much alive and well on the issue of Cyprus. ‘Make them suffer to submission’ is the motto. It will never work.”

Perceptions count, more than can be imagined. One can only guess how the attitudes in the ongoing talks will be affected by the vote within the EP. It would be worthy to take the pulse of the Turk Cypriots at this stage, but it is clear that not even the European wish to spend efforts to “measure the mood.”

Certainly, many Europeans feel frustrated, and they are justified in doing so. But the fact of the matter is that very few admit that what Lagendijk calls “Cypriot shrewdness” has been dragging the entire EU, like a pet on a leash, into the trap of being minimized to a political tool to destroy all prospects for a fair, lasting solution on the island, and to anger Turkish society “out of EU negotiations.” Shrewdness works, the Greek Cypriots have come far, thanks to the silent agreement with the anti-Turkey block within the EU. The “alliance,” one must commend, has been successful — so far.

Lagendijk is certainly right when he issues a “heads-up” to his decent and honest politician colleagues and says that “the island indeed proved to be a ‘single-issue member state’ that has only one interest: to use its power inside the EU to extract concessions from both the Turkish Cypriots and the Turks.” From this point on, it will be much, much harder to regain the confidence of Turkey’s citizens and Turk Cypriots that the EU is firm and consistent on its moral ground.

An alarmist article like the one you are reading often receives a barrage of critique and name-calling. Most of them are superficial and one-sided. Others are either based on clichés or are “mechanical” — i.e., based on notions that exclude the human side, ethics, trust, justice, hope, etc. in favor of a power game, revenge and one’s superiority over the other.

This is the tragedy of Cyprus, held hostage in the belief that employing all efforts to turn international powers — the EU and, increasingly, Russia — against it will work. Unless a new wisdom within the EU develops, it will only, sadly, extend the suffering, ad infinitum.

Sources

Source : TdZ, 29 October 2010, Friday