



Document ID: GMP20030902000150
Version Number: 1

Region: West Europe

Sub-Region: Mediterranean Sea

Country: CYPRUS, GREECE, TURKEY

Topic: HUMAN RIGHTS, INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC, INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL, LEADER

Source-Date: 09/02/2003

Southern Cyprus' Papadopoulos on Annan Plan, EU Membership, Turkish Threat

GMP20030902000150 Istanbul Radikal (Internet Version-WWW) in Turkish 2 Sep 03

[Interview by Erdal Guven with Tassos Papadopoulos at Greek Cypriot Prime Ministry in Nicosia, date not given, first two paragraphs introduction: "No Difference Between Erdogan and Denktas"]

[FBIS Translated Text]

Tasos Papadopoulos began politics by saying, "No." The year was 1959. he had just turned 25 and was already the apple of Makarios' eye. He was at Makarios' side when the latter was in London to discuss the future of Cyprus. When the offer was put to them of a memorandum of understanding that would render impossible both "enosis" and "partition", the pro-enosis Papadopoulos unhesitatingly said, "No." Be that as it may the matter was soon out of his hands and the Republic of Cyprus was declared.

Once again the issue of a new joint state on Cyprus has gained currency. I am facing Papadopoulos at the Prime Ministry in Nicosia to talk about this with him. Now you cannot talk about the present or the future without talking about what happened here in the past. Especially when the person you are talking to is someone like Papadopoulos, who has been unable to shake off the shadow of the past. I began by asking him about that first "No". By way of reply he said something I had not hoped to hear and that nobody has ever heard:

[Papadopoulos] Of course it is easy to be wise in hindsight. Had I known then what I know now I would have said, "Yes". However, with what I knew and all that I had been through until then I opposed independence.

He began the interview with a confession. I asked once again to be certain:

[Guven] In other words you accept you made a mistake by insisting on enosis?

His one-word reply: "Yes."

This was significant because Papadopoulos was not just any old oily rag in the enosis engine; he was one of the engineers. When EOKA started action opposing British rule in 1955 he was the organization's man responsible for Nicosia. Over time he rose in Makarios' eyes and became the head of EOKA's political wing (PEKA). His rise continued after the London conference. With his legal background and his political aggressiveness he was on the team that wrote up the new state's constitution. He worked first as Minister of Employment and then as Interior Minister in the first government of the Republic of Cyprus.

We Failed to Explain it to the People

As a result he was part of the Republic of Cyprus from beginning to end. So, why in his opinion did the first political union on the island fail? Why did the state collapse after three years?

[Papadopoulos] Half way along and Makarios decided to opt for independence. We failed to explain this properly to the people. Having said that, the Turks had also started a nationalist struggle against us. They wanted partition. They were not too happy with the idea of full independence. Another reason was the fact that the London and Zurich agreements afforded the Cypriot Turks more rights than the demographic reality on the ground. For example, the ratio of 70-30 was set for public sector service but this was a violation of the principle of merit. A good many qualified Greek Cypriots were left unemployed just to show that the Turkish Cypriots had a contingent. This put people off the State. This was not the only problem of course, just an example. But when you apply this situation to everybody you see why people were unhappy with the State. Consequently, the people -- both Turkish and Greek Cypriot -- were unable to find the time to make the most of the bounties of independence. Naturally, both peoples were caught up in their respective nationalisms.

The collapse as I have explained it is an analysis in the light of historical fact. Now I am going to state my own personal interpretation. Turkey's plan for Cyprus had always been to keep a sizeable proportion of the country and to regulate the remaining land. Whether for strategic or other reasons I do not know, but that is how it was.

He did not give much scope for being wrong, but he could have been. He gave proof:

[Papadopoulos] In 1956 the British introduced a man named Lord Radcliffe. He soon afterwards published what they call a "White Paper". This said that the Turks wanted partition and as this was not on so the Turks should establish their own administration as part of a federal system. The Turks even gave Radcliffe a map. That map is the same as today's map of the Green Line, apart from a three-kilometer difference. Radcliffe told them, "A federal solution is impossible without ensuring a one-two region territory using forced migration." The policy pursued by the Turks until 1974 was the result of this warning.

There was still much to talk about pre-1974. For example, the enosis struggle had ended in 1960. EOKA had to all intents and purposes ceased to exist but the name EOKA still lived on just like the word enosis.

[Papadopoulos] True, some EOKA members did not stop. They proclaimed Makarios a traitor for giving up on enosis. They started a political struggle against him. I was not one of them. They were a minority, in any case.

EOKA had been formed in the 1950s with great popular (Greek Cypriot) support to oppose colonial rule. However, did the Greek Cypriot leadership, which Papadopoulos was a part of, not have any role to play in EOKA taking on an ethno-nationalist shape and degenerating into the fascist-terrorist organization EOKA-B in the 1970s? That same EOKA-B that threw Papadopoulos into prison during the coup in 1974? What did Papadopoulos and the Greek Cypriot leadership do to prevent things unfolding as they did and to convince the Turkish Cypriots that they had abandoned enosis?

[Guven] You were part of that organization and knew it very well.

[Papadopoulos] There was not much we could do. They were functioning as a legal political party. We took those who resorted to violence to court. They were a small minority.

As Papadopoulos was saying this quite naturally things other than EOKA and enosis sprung to mind. The infamous Akritas plan that made its mark on the 1960s. The Turkish Cypriots saw this as "a final solution" plan that aimed to eliminate all the Turkish Cypriots one way or another. The Greek Cypriots saw it as a plan of action to implement if Turkey ever invaded the island. Papadopoulos has always maintained this view and still does today. He recommends that the curious open up and read the plan, especially the foreword to the plan.

Papadopoulos was first a member of EOKA and then a politician who spent many years on the Cyprus stage, so does he not feel a debt of gratitude towards the Turkish Cypriots? His predecessor Kliridhis showed enough alacrity to apologize to the Turks for what happened in 1974 when he spoke on 1 October Independence Day after getting elected. With just one month before 1 October this year, does Papadopoulos have such an intention, I wonder?

[Papadopoulos] I always admit my mistakes. However, there is no point in my making such a statement. What can empty words achieve? Action speaks louder. Besides, I have never done anything I regret or feel the need to apologize for all my life, especially with respect to the Turkish Cypriots. I have always spoken about the Turkish Cypriots as my brothers and compatriots. I would like to point out in particular what I did as Minister of Employment to enhance the Turkish Cypriots' social rights. The work I did then shows how I view the Turkish Cypriots.

Papadopoulos remained in government after 1963. He was Kliridhis' advisor in intercommunal talks up until 1976. In 1978 he passed this job on to Kliridhis. Why has nothing been achieved after all these years?

[Papadopoulos] Because of Turkey's policy. Turkey has always has a finger in Cyprus. I explained why earlier. There were two problems then: Firstly, Denktas' wish for autonomy. Secondly, the hang up about a federation, especially after Ecevit came to power.

That is possible, but the name Papadopoulos was never associated with solution on Cyprus. He was behind Kyprianou when he said no to a solution in 1968. Papadopoulos was against Vassiliou when he leaned towards a solution in 1992. Be that as it may, the time came to put a lid on the past for this interview.

"We Want Solution Before EU"

1. The Greek Cypriot leader Papadopoulos blames both Denktas and Ankara for the stalemate on Cyprus: There is no difference between Erdogan and Denktas.

2. Papadopoulos said that his wishes for amendments to the Annan Plan never contradicted the philosophy of the plan and that they were not trying to revoke the political rights given to the Turkish Cypriots.

After 50 years of political struggle Papadopoulos is finally President. He was elected for five years. Before the interview I had read almost all his keynote speeches made prior to and after his election. The Greek Cypriot leader sees himself neither as rejectionist nor as pessimist. "I am a realist," he said. What ought we to understand from that? Especially, in connection with the solution to the Cyprus issue.

[Papadopoulos] Look, I want to see a solution and I want to see it before joining the EU. I am not oblivious to what the Turkish side is saying. They say, "With the EU in the bag now they have turned their backs on a solution." That is not realistic. Look, there is a line in the country. It cannot be a border because that would mean two states, but there is a political entity or something in the north. If Cyprus joins the EU in this condition it will join as a divided state and the EU's laws will not apply in the north. This is the exact opposite of what we want. Think of all the problems this would create. I want to stress something. We are passionate and genuine about a solution. However, we want a solution that is functional and workable. Failing that any agreement would die even before the ink dries.

No Objection to Political Rights

There is a word that Papadopoulos has never stopped saying ever since the Hague Summit: Functionality. This word brings to mind, at least to my mind, the following suspicion: Does Papadopoulos think the Turkish Cypriots were given too many political rights just like in the 1960s? Does he think these rights might make the State unworkable?

"No, no," says Papadopoulos. "I am talking about amendments that will make the plan, the agreement, more workable. Of course I have my reservations about the political rights given to the Turkish Cypriots. However, if one is realistic and not idealistic then we have to accept these rights within the parameters set by the Annan Plan. Whether we like it or not. Unlike Denktas, I do not believe the Annan Plan is dead in the water. This is a consensus. If you are a realist then you will know you will not have everything your own way in a consensus. When I say functional I mean the arrangements necessary so that Cyprus' EU membership will not be a source of consternation. On the contrary this will be for the sake of the Turkish Cypriots' rights.

"There are other things, of course but please do not ask me for a list of the changes I want to see. I want to negotiate them not impose them.

"Another matter is this. Do you know what will happen if one of the founding states wishes to amend its own constitution and this runs counter to the joint state's constitution? The matter will go the constitutional court and then things will just get protracted. This will impose problems on our responsibilities towards the EU. We might find ourselves facing monetary penalties in economic matters.

"If there is good will and political will then everything can get worked out with common sense. We told the UN what we wanted to see changed."

[Güven] So what was the UN's reply?

[Papadopoulos] The only reply we got was that our suggested amendments still fit the parameters of the plan. Unlike Denktas we did not walk over the concept and philosophy of the plan.

If Papadopoulos considers himself a realist, what I wonder does he think of Denktas?

[Papadopoulos] Who am I to make a character appraisal of Denktas? That would not be appropriate. He is probably trying to do what he knows best for his people. His people know him the best.

The Greek Cypriot leader tries to avoid the question but when I press on he "caves in". However, it is not his view he puts across but that of someone he spoke to yesterday.

[Papadopoulos] I was speaking to a guest of mine sitting in that exact same chair yesterday. He said to me: "Denktas has had a dream for the past 40-50 years. To make Cyprus a part of Turkey, or at least part of Cyprus. He has put his life and soul into this. But he knows that will never happen. I understand his reaction but do not agree with it."

[Guven] Why did the Greek Cypriots elect you?

[Papadopoulos] I do not know. I was a candidate. They know I am true to my word. They know that when I say, "I want a solution," then I believe what I say and that I am seeking a solution on the basis of the Annan Plan.

But the same Papadopoulos was critical of both the Annan Plan and of Kliridhis, who was striving for a solution, right before the elections.

[Papadopoulos] Possible. I might have been critical of the concessions they were giving or their conference tactics.

[Guven] What exactly were you critical of?

[Papadopoulos] I cannot say. However, most of the people accepted the Annan Plan with a few corrections.

Papadopoulos does no doubt have an image problem and from what I understand over the five days I stayed in the south of Cyprus this is not limited to the Turkish side alone. He is criticized not only by Ankara and Denktas but also by the other pro-solution Turkish Cypriot leaders. For example, Republican Turkish Party [CTP] Leader Mehmet Ali Talat. I asked Papadopoulos what he thought he owed this image to.

[Papadopoulos] Talat says he accepts the Annan plan as it is and he wants me to say the same thing because in the first place if he wins the elections and says yes to the plan he will automatically become an EU citizen. Secondly, he sees our demand for all settlers (Turkish Cypriots who are mainland Turkey in origin) who are outside the plan to return to Turkey as racism.

I do not agree with you about the negative image thing. I think quite the opposite. Besides, I do not think that the Turkish Cypriots would have affection for any Cypriot President.

[Guven] They had liked Vassiliou if I am not mistaken. At last that is what they say.

[Papadopoulos] Who knows? Perhaps. Of course I am a little upset that the Turkish

[Papadopoulos] The only reply we got was that our suggested amendments still fit the parameters of the plan. Unlike Denktas we did not walk over the concept and philosophy of the plan.

If Papadopoulos considers himself a realist, what I wonder does he think of Denktas?

[Papadopoulos] Who am I to make a character appraisal of Denktas? That would not be appropriate. He is probably trying to do what he knows best for his people. His people know him the best.

The Greek Cypriot leader tries to avoid the question but when I press on he "caves in". However, it is not his view he puts across but that of someone he spoke to yesterday.

[Papadopoulos] I was speaking to a guest of mine sitting in that exact same chair yesterday. He said to me: "Denktas has had a dream for the past 40-50 years. To make Cyprus a part of Turkey, or at least part of Cyprus. He has put his life and soul into this. But he knows that will never happen. I understand his reaction but do not agree with it."

[Güven] Why did the Greek Cypriots elect you?

[Papadopoulos] I do not know. I was a candidate. They know I am true to my word. They know that when I say, "I want a solution," then I believe what I say and that I am seeking a solution on the basis of the Annan Plan.

But the same Papadopoulos was critical of both the Annan Plan and of Kliridhis, who was striving for a solution, right before the elections.

[Papadopoulos] Possible. I might have been critical of the concessions they were giving or their conference tactics.

[Güven] What exactly were you critical of?

[Papadopoulos] I cannot say. However, most of the people accepted the Annan Plan with a few corrections.

Papadopoulos does no doubt have an image problem and from what I understand over the five days I stayed in the south of Cyprus this is not limited to the Turkish side alone. He is criticized not only by Ankara and Denktas but also by the other pro-solution Turkish Cypriot leaders. For example, Republican Turkish Party [CTP] Leader Mehmet Ali Talat. I asked Papadopoulos what he thought he owed this image to.

[Papadopoulos] Talat says he accepts the Annan plan as it is and he wants me to say the same thing because in the first place if he wins the elections and says yes to the plan he will automatically become an EU citizen. Secondly, he sees our demand for all settlers (Turkish Cypriots who are mainland Turkey in origin) who are outside the plan to return to Turkey as racism.

I do not agree with you about the negative image thing. I think quite the opposite. Besides, I do not think that the Turkish Cypriots would have affection for any Cypriot President.

[Güven] They had liked Vassiliou if I am not mistaken. At last that is what they say.

[Papadopoulos] Who knows? Perhaps. Of course I am a little upset that the Turkish

[Guven] In his report, Annan accuses the Greek Cypriot leadership of not exerting enough effort to convince its population about the need to make concessions for a solution.

[Papadopoulos] He is partially right. But he overlooked one thing. What can you prepare the people for if you do not know what the solution is? Now there is a plan and we are saying it is can be accepted if it is corrected.

[Guven] But Annan says that the Greek Cypriot people do not see the need for a choice between the Annan Plan and a stalemate.

Papadopoulos does not agree.

[Guven] Final question: What do think about Erdogan?

[Papadopoulos] I do not know him. Nor do I know much about Turkish domestic policy. Therefore, I cannot make an evaluation based on the speeches he has given. I have also heard what they said about his coming here. Everything he said dovetailed perfectly with Denktas' policy. It is clear that Erdogan fully supports Denktas' views about the Annan Plan and solution.

"I Was Never Milosevich's Lawyer"

Prior to the elections Papadopoulos was accused indirectly by the Americans and the Europeans of being Milosevich's lawyer. Although it might appear irrelevant it cannot go unasked. Even though he did not like the question Papadopoulos did not evade it.

[Papadopoulos] I was never his lawyer, period.

[Guven] Where did that allegation come from then?

[Papadopoulos] I own a law firm. It employs 17 lawyers. Some of Milosevich's firms are registered with mine. However, a company boss cannot know all his customers. Besides, I was occupied with the elections.

[Guven] Did you know your company was working with a man like Milosevich?

[Papadopoulos] My company was not doing business with Milosevich, it provided legal services. In my company there are records for eight companies run by a bank that belongs to, is said to belong to, Milosevich. Besides, a legal firm is not concerned with the business of the companies registered to it. They do the record keeping and I get my money. I never met him personally. We only paid a courtesy visit to him once and that was as parliamentarians. I never corresponded with him, never spoke to him on the phone. He never asked me for anything. Someone made such an allegation. Others took it up. There are 70,000 companies recorded here. Some 7,500 or so belong to Serbs. Only 22 belong to me.

[Description of Source: Istanbul Radikal (Internet Version-WWW) in Turkish -- center-left daily that targets young intellectuals, owned by Aydin Dogan, head of the Dogan Media Group--Root URL <http://www.radikal.com.tr/>]

THIS REPORT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.