

If I were Christofias*

■ *by Zeynel Lüle***

I am not Christofias, although I have decided to think as if I were he.

First of all, I would be the most vehement opponent of the position of France against Turkish entrance into the European Union. I would regard France as a country undercutting my cause, not supporting it, because my trump card as the Greek Cypriot communal leader is the prospective Turkish EU membership.

As the leader of the Republic of Cyprus, a member of the EU, I have the leverage to use the European platform in order to impose a sanction against, or even threaten, Turkey. This can, however, only happen against a particular backdrop where Turkey's membership is not otherwise questioned.

I would not, by turning to Turkey, point fingers at her and say: "well, if you do not contribute to a solution, forget about the EU membership," because I would clearly see how meaningless this sentence would be.

I would envision the following response coming from Turkey and feel ashamed of my words: "Cypriot hindrance of my full membership does not make it any worse at all, since France is already doing that."

If I were Christofias, I would feel so bad each and every time President Sarkozy says "Turkey is not a European country." And also I would cry foul when Pierre Lelouche, EU Affairs Minister, remarks

* An earlier version of this article was published on Referans, a nation-wide newspaper, on 13.11.2009 and translated by Cemâl Dursun.

** The author is a veteran journalist based in Brussels and can be reached at zlule@skynet.be.

that EU enlargement will not go beyond the Balkans, even I could not sleep because of my sorrow.

Amity, not enmity

If I were Christofias, I would not get carried away with the idea of France being supportive of me. I would never think for a second that France is there throwing her weight behind me in the EU. I would realize that my trump card is taken away when France states her view that “Turkey cannot be a EU member,” and naturally I would try to woo Paris away from pursuing such a policy.

I would even go so far as to ask if she has anything against me, and I would tell her in the strongest terms that “with this attitude, you do not strengthen me, but instead weaken me a great deal.”

I would most definitely advance the idea that not only does France eliminate my influence, but also that she prevents me from having the backing of the EU, and I would constantly remind myself of an old saying: A good enemy is a better person than a false friend.

I would pick myself up, dust myself off and soon realize that a Turkey without the prospect of full EU membership would not be that willing, if at all, to work towards any kind of Cyprus “solution.”

Land acquisition

If I were Christofias, I would do everything to obtain an expeditious solution, because I would know that I can find a long-lasting comprehensive solution only with Mehmet Ali Talat on the side of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (aka TRNC). What is more, I would not labor under the illusion of “pressuring” Turkey; by the same token I would not get the EU involved in the first place.

I would weep with joy hearing that in case of a solution the British would voluntarily give three percent of their land away. And I would also know that any solution would cause the TRNC to return eight percent of the land they control. I would certainly envisage that a solution would bring about acquisition of eleven percent of the island’s land by Greek Cypriots, and I would tell this to my fellow countrymen in a victory parade on the streets of Nicosia.

If I were Christofias, I would make a hasty effort to shake hands with Talat, and I would make sure that TRNC joins the EU under real terms.

If I somehow were Christofias, I would not be so naive as Christofias himself.