

If I were Talat*

■ *by Zeynel Lüle***

Last time around, I started off as “if I were Christofias,” then went on to point out that by attaching significance to his “conciliatory” character, Mehmet Ali Talat, with whom Christofias sat down around a table for a solution, is “the only person on the island”. I concluded by saying that “if I were Christofias, I would shake hands with Talat sooner rather than later, and I would not include the EU in the talks all the time.”

Right after my piece of writing, the EU left Christofias stranded, did not throw its weight behind him, and his expectations of Turkey being sanctioned turned out to be anything, but empty. Christofias wasted his energy in the corridors of Brussels, and went back to his meeting with Talat a drained man and with his mind back in Brussels. In this particular respect, what would I do if I were Mehmet Ali Talat?

Let me tell you...

I could not deliver on two promises

First thing, I would not even dare to consider running for presidency in April 2010. At least when I sit down around a table with Christofias, I would not think about the upcoming election while I negotiate a long-lasting solution, so that I would have the upper hand.

The people of my community elected me for two reasons. I should always be acutely aware of that. Firstly, I was to re-unite Cyprus; secondly I was to have made all Turkish Cypriots EU citizens. But I could not accomplish both. On the contrary, I created a community who eventually

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brought nay-sayers into power.

If I were Talat, I would sit across Christofias with the following mindset: “I have nothing to lose. Quite to the opposite, a solution would be my biggest gain ever.”

I would always have the upper hand

Yes, I would always have the upper hand. Provided that political equality is preserved, I would show flexibility in many areas. I would not regard a federal solution from the viewpoint of secession, which is a policy dearly pursued by Rauf Denktaş and Mümtaz Soysal; instead I would rather take the view of a “centre-powered” policy. Simply because, a centrally-powered federal system would be in favour of a community in securing political equality as minority.

Walloons in Belgium take the centre-powered structure dearly. What accounts for that is the fact that in only this way do they see themselves as more powerful as compared to richer and population-wise stronger Flemish.

I would not stick with Annan Plan all along

If I were Mehmet Ali Talat, I would not treat the Annan Plan as a biblical script. I would sympathise with the aversion that the Greek Cypriots have about that, thus I would not see Annan Plan as the Ten Commandments.

If I were Talat, I would approach many items on the table with the rapprochement in the back of my mind except for acquisition of political equality and imposing it on the Greek Cypriots as such.

I would approve of the idea for a rotating presidency as put forward by the Greek Cypriots, and I would straight away support the system which envisages a presidential office being occupied by a Greek Cypriot for 4 years followed by a Turkish Cypriot for 2 years.

Also I would love the idea thrown around by the Greek Cypriots that the Turkish Cypriots would have a sway on the elections held on the Greek Cypriot side by 20%, and vice versa. By doing so, I would think of the Turkish Cypriots impacting the elections held on the Greek Cypriot side by 20%, and I would grab it preciously.

I would do away with the idea of losing oranges there if I were to give away Güzelyurt (Morphou). I would not be much preoccupied with that; rather in return for a comprehensive solution of the property question, I would be fine with making concessions by acceding at least 8% of the land to Greek Cypriots, or even more.

I would not turn a blind eye to the benefits that my country would get in return from a “federal solution.”

As a first course of action, I would work out the property problem,

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the most problematic of all to make headway, by compromising on land. I would enjoy having Christofias and his opponent Anastasiadis as my counterparts sitting right before me today as “pro-solution leaders”, and therefore would always be mindful of the fact that in the south of island, a “no-way person” like Papadopoulos might well be sitting across the table tomorrow. When it comes to acting, I would not deny the fact that if there were to be a solution, that dream would not come true without Christofias.

If I were Talat, I would try to sympathise a little bit with the concerns Greek Cypriots have.

I would never forget that in case of a solution, the Republic of Turkey would always stand behind me no matter what, and I would say that considering myself as a key person in all this, I would be the one who would get the most out of a possible solution.

If I were Talat, I would firmly cling to the idea of political equality, and for issues other than that, I would be as flexible as possible and solve this problem in just 15 days.