

## Cyprus “Pandora’s box”

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1. The Cyprus problem has its direct origins in the Summer of 1974, when a coup d'état instigated by the Greek nationalist right (the Regime of the Colonels), provoked the deposition of President Makarios and his substitution by Nikos Sampson. It was an effort to place in power, by force, the Cypriots in favour of *enosis* (political unification with Greece). These events gave rise to two successive military interventions from Turkey, in July and August of 1974. They were ordered by the Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit – under pressure of nationalist public opinion and the Islamist leader, Necmettin Erbakan –, invoking the agreements for the independence of Cyprus (1960), signed at Zurich and London (between the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey). In the year after the Turkish invasion, in 1975, it was proclaimed the Turkish Federate State of North Cyprus (coincidentally, or perhaps not, in the same year as the Indonesian invasion of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor). As a consequence of the negative reaction from the international community, in 1983 there appeared a new “sovereign state” created by Turkey: the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). However, the resolutions n° 541 (1983) and 550 (1984) of the Security Council of the United Nations made this proclamation illegal (the only country who recognizes the TRNC is Turkey).

2. After two decades of stalemate, a round of negotiations for the reunification of the island was held under the supervision of Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan. Its

main solution was the building of a confederation inspired on the Helvetic model. In the end, the Annan Plan was submitted to a referendum in April 2004. The Turkish Cypriots voted in favour of the Plan but the on the Greek Cypriot side the majority of electors were against the Annan Plan. Perhaps the result of the referendum was an ironic one: the community who voted in favour of the Plan (the Turkish Cypriots) was kept outside the European Union. But we must remember that we are in presence of a very complex problem. It involves, for example, the retreat of more than 30.000 Turkish soldiers; the return of houses and other property to the former owners expelled to the other side of the island; the problem of the repatriation of the émigrés/“colonizers” sent from Anatolia to the RTNC (nowadays perhaps half of the population); and symbolic and emotional subjects like the destruction of churches and graveyards. Further, an intricate problem to solve is to know who are the “original” Turkish Cypriots (i. e. the people with roots on the island before the invasion of 1974), because of the generous concession of “nationality” made by the authorities of RTNC. This raises another question to mind: what was the weight of the émigrés/“colonizers” in the referendum that occurred in the Northern side of the island?

**3.** With Cyprus accession to the EU in 2004 and the negotiations with Turkey since 2005 the problem has become an internal European affair. In the recent report of the European Commission, COM (2006)/649, we can read that “Turkey has not fully implemented the Additional Protocol extending the EC-Turkey Association Agreement to the ten Member States that acceded on 1 May 2004, signed in July 2005 and which enabled the accession negotiations to start. Turkey has continued to deny access to any its ports of vessels flying the Republic of Cyprus flag or where the last port of call is in Cyprus. Such restrictions (...) infringe the Customs Union agreement”. These statements of the European Commission are not a surprise. Any attentive observer has noted the Turkish strategy of a “parallel diplomacy”

with the countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), trying to obtain an international recognition of TRNC. The government and public opinion in Turkey seems to be convinced the EU needs more Turkey than the reverse. The accession of Turkey and the reunification of Cyprus is a Pandora's box opened by the EU. The question that remains unanswered is how to close it.