

The Lyssarides Foundation

**‘The European Fulfilment and its
Effect on the Cyprus Question’**

Dame Pauline Green

Nicosia

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Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure and honour to have been asked to give this paper today for the Lyssarides Foundation.

It is as ever wonderful to be back in Cyprus – a country in which I feel at home and with which I feel a keen and powerful empathy.

As the British Member of the European Parliament for the decade from 1989 to 1999, my offices in both Brussels and Strasbourg became known as ‘the Cyprus Office’! That was reflective of my absolute belief that having been elected to Europe’s Parliament, I had an unparalleled obligation and opportunity to act on one of the most pressing issues affecting a very large proportion of my voters – the division of the island of Cyprus.

North London, as my constituency was then known, was made up of the London boroughs of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey. As all of you in this room will know those three boroughs were, and indeed are the home of the largest Cypriot community in the UK. Cypriot migrants settled from the 1950s and 60s onwards, initially in Tottehnam, Wood Green and Stoke Newington in London. Like the Jewish migrant community before them, their social and economic progress can be traced as both Greek and Turkish Cypriots settled, became successful and more wealthy, and moved from the inner city boroughs of Haringey and Islington to the leafy suburbs of Enfield and Barnet.

I should be clear that for me North London is very special. My father's family came from Haringey, Tottenham to be precise. One of the 10 children of a Wood Green bus conductor, my father lied about his age and joined the British army at 16 to try to make his own way in the world and change his life. After training he was posted to the Royal Artillery Regiment and sent to the Mediterranean island of Malta, where he not only spent the whole of the Second World War, but where at the age of 21 he met and married a very beautiful 16 year old Maltese girl - my mother – hence my strong affinity with Mediterranean islands and, perhaps, my intuitive understanding of the Mediterranean temperament! My mother at 85 is still a volatile and strong-minded old lady of very firm views!

So you can see that the Mediterranean – its people, culture, food, and history has always been a part of my life. It didn't start when I entered the European Parliament and found myself representing a large Cypriot community. My interest was not one of political expediency, it was part of an ingrained lifelong personal fascination and interest built on personal roots and engagement.

I am also delighted to be able to speak for the Lyssarides Foundation. I have only known Vassos Lyssarides since I became the candidate for the European Parliament in 1988. That is, of course, some 23 years now. It sounds a long time – and on one level it is. But everyone knows of the immense contribution that Vassos Lyssarides made to the living history of Cyprus in the decades before 1988. He was part of the story of Cyprus, involved in one way or another in all the key decision-making moments of this island's life since the 1950s. In unique ways his work as a physician, a fighter, and a politician gave him a quite remarkable view of personalities, issues, political choices, successes and failures. And with all that background, and his remarkable and very considerable intellect, it is not surprising that he became one of the foremost political operators in Cyprus for over five decades.

Most particularly, he is one of the greatest orators that I have ever heard – and, please remember that I don't speak Greek! But you don't have to know the language to know that you are listening to someone who has an almost spiritual empathy with the emotions of man. Someone who can take complex issues and powerful arguments and keep an audience spellbound.

I have always enjoyed talking to Vassos and I have walked the well-trodden path to his doorway whenever visiting Cyprus. I am proud to

think of him as a friend and mentor, and once again very pleased to be speaking for his Foundation.

So, today I want to talk to you about ‘The European Fulfilment and its Effect on the Cyprus Question.

To do that I propose to take as my starting point the analysis that I formulated, together with my long-standing political adviser and friend Ray Collins, who is now, of course, a fully fledged, passport carrying Cypriot himself, and lives here in Nicosia.

After setting out my stall about just why and how I worked for a solution to the Cyprus problem and how I integrated it with my European activity, I want then to go on to look at the up to date impact of the initiatives taken in that period, and whether they still have currency today. In other words just how can Cyprus’ European vocation be harnessed for the wider objective of solving the Cyprus problem.

As I began work on this paper, I must admit I was helped by two changes that have taken place in my life during the last ten years.

Firstly, I am no longer subject to the limitations, or perhaps restrictions, of elected politics. I can take a wider and more expansive view of the European dimension and place it in the context of today’s world without having to be conscious of the straight jacket that party politics can often impose!

Secondly, for the last ten years I have been working within the world wide co-operatives movement, firstly as the Chief Executive of Co-operatives UK, the apex body for all UK’s co-ops, a sector of the UK economy that is today worth £33 billion to the UK economy.

During that time one of my key functions was to represent the UK co-operatives within the global co-operative movement. The size, scope and reach of the world wide co-operative movement is one of the world’s best kept secrets. Owned by nearly one billion people across the globe, and employing over 100 million people worldwide, co-operatives are a huge part of the global economy. In commercial terms, the top 300 co-operative businesses are together worth 1.3 trillion US\$ and that is just the top 300, we have hundreds of thousands of co-ops, operating in just about every sector of the economy in virtually every country in the world.

Incidentally you should know that small as this island is, the strength of the Cypriot co-operative economy, particularly the co-operative banking sector is much admired around the world. The Cyprus Co-operative Bank is well connected to key co-operative banking and retailing sectors

around the world and plays a valued role in Co-operatives Europe, the European region of the International Co-operative Alliance, as well as those of the worldwide movement. In terms of percentage of the national economy and market, the co-operative input to the Cypriot economy is significant. I am pleased to have an ongoing and strong working relationship on the island with my co-operative colleagues.

In November 2009, and one month after retiring my post in Co-operatives UK, I was elected as President of the International Co-operative Alliance, the global body that unites, represents and serves co-operatives across the world for a four year term. My experience working within that global sphere has given me a unique insight into just how the world today is changing, and equally allowed me to formulate some ideas about what we need to do today to meet human need rather than human greed. But more of that later.

Within the opening months of my time in the European Parliament it became clear to me that the issue of the Cyprus Question was clearly going to be one of the defining issues of my political life in the European institutions. With that in mind, I wanted to develop a longer-term strategy with an objective that, if achieved, would make a real difference for Cyprus and its people. I was conscious that something was expected of me by the Cypriot constituency back home, and whilst it would have been simpler to jump to my feet every time that an opportunity arose which allowed me to mention Cyprus in the Parliament, the overall impact of that would have been ad hoc, pedestrian and ineffective.

The result of all the deliberation, was the evolution of the concept of the parallel course – running together two strands of work - the entry of Cyprus into the European Union and the work to solve the division of Cyprus. The decision of the government of the Republic of Cyprus to make application for membership of the European Union in July 1990 was key to making that work.

Some of you may know that this was thoroughly articulated in the book, *Embracing Cyprus, the Path to Unity in the New Europe*, that Ray and I published in 2003 and which laid out the multi faceted layers of work that went into that strategy over nine years.

The strategy was essentially in two phases. The first was to reinvigorate the Cyprus issue with national decision-makers and political parties in the Member States of the EU, and to establish the European Parliament as a key player in the eyes of the protagonists in the eastern Mediterranean, both civil and military. At the same time working in the European institutions to enshrine the political objective that the unity of Cyprus

could, for the foreseeable future, only be achieved through the accession of the entire island to the EU. Therefore, creating the imperative for the EU to put energy and creativity into driving not just the accession process, but the process for a solution of the Cyprus problem. In essence tying the two processes together.

By 1994, the first phase of that work had largely been completed. In the search for a solution to the division of Cyprus, the European Parliament as an institution had become a political agitator that simply could not be circumnavigated by national politicians or European bureaucrats. At the same time, the group of parliamentarians who supported the concept had grown in size and commitment, covering all the political groupings in the Parliament and all the nationalities in the EU.

The second phase began in July 1994 after the next elections to the European Parliament, and after my election to the leadership of what was then the Socialist/Social Democratic Group – the largest parliamentary group in the European Parliament.

The second phase sought to use the new powers of the European Parliament to drive the European Commission and Council towards the realisation that the solution to the Cyprus problem needed to be propelled alongside the lengthy timetable for Cyprus' accession to the EU.

Whilst the United Nations had exercised the responsibility for the Cyprus problem since 1964, it was clear that the major stakeholders in securing peace and reconciliation in Cyprus were all European countries. Hence although the UN had been seeking to secure a solution for Cyprus for four decades, the real answer lay in Europe.

I knew that this was a delicate and complex course to follow. So it proved. And yet, it so nearly succeeded, and in the postscript for our book in 2003, we argued that 'without the EU, Kofi Annan would not have been in a position to have tabled his 150 page proposals for a solution in November 2002. Without the EU, Turkey would not have had the imperative to seek greater engagement from its Turkish Cypriot compatriots in the solution process. Without the EU, people in the north of Cyprus would not have felt the enormous sense of impending disadvantage that drove them to demonstrate in their tens of thousands calling for their leaders to engage with the EU and the UN plan or resign. Without the EU, the momentum and impetus for a solution would simply not have existed at that moment.'

We also said that for the then current drive to end in a solution depended on the continuing creativity of the international community – sadly in my

view that was not forthcoming, and the intervention of the international community that was needed at that time to refine the final details of the flawed Annan plan and bring the agony of Cyprus to an end failed yet again.

Why do I refer to it as the ‘flawed Annan plan’? Simply because, for a solution to be secured, any proposals had to carry the majority of votes from both Cypriot communities. It became clear during the weeks of the referendum campaign that the Annan plan did not. The fact that it was seriously compromised as far as the Greek Cypriots was concerned should have led to an infusion of international activity to ensure that the problems were ironed out, or that greater explanation or reassurance was given as needed. None of that happened, rather high profile international leaders lined up to make aggressive and threatening remarks about the potential of a rejection of the proposals. Such comments were almost designed to lead to failure at the ballot box, which was, of course, the ultimate result.

This was not just a failure for the United Nations, it was a failure of international diplomacy by the key nations involved including my own. But it was also a major failure for the European Union’s evolving foreign policy which, frankly at that point, had most to lose outside of Cyprus itself.

To reiterate and strengthen that point, in 1995 at a private meeting with me and Ray in the Hilton Hotel in Strasbourg, the then Secretary General of the United Nations Boutros Boutros-Ghali told me that as far as Cyprus was concerned, Europe was the only card on the table. By 2003, that hand of cards was nearly played out, and yet had key players responded differently there was still just an opportunity for Europe to have played that late ace.

What is the core philosophical and strategic concept that the EU brings to the Cyprus problem. It is as a model of conflict resolution based on the underlying EU ethos of peaceful co-existence, dialogue, tolerance, respect of difference, solidarity, compromise and the defence and pursuit of individual rights, social justice and economic prosperity.

Having secured Cyprus’ route to the EU, which at that time clearly carried the support of the Turkish Cypriot people as well, the reality of a European vocation, rather than the reality of a high-level political fix could have succeeded in giving the final text its public credibility and acceptability.

What was needed was some further understanding of the need to enhance trust and confidence amongst the people. To give some sign that their anxieties and concerns were understood and taken to heart. That was not to be and once again the chance for a solution to the Cyprus problem was lost.

So,

I left the European Parliament at the end of 1999. Left six months after being re-elected top of the London list for my third term, once again with massive Cypriot support.

I had spent 10 years representing the people of North London – my part of London where my family came from and where I still lived – representing them in the Parliament of Europe. Nothing could have been a greater privilege.

It was the best possible job, especially having had the opportunity to spend the last five years of my career as the leader of the largest political group – in essence I had been the first voice in the Parliament.

I had been on the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom for seven years. I had worked with the Prime Ministers of 12 of the 15 European Union Member States coming from the Party of European Socialists. It had been fabulous. But my whole instinct told me that it was the right time to go.

With hindsight it was. I would have found it difficult to support the Party on whose ticket I had been elected through some of its most controversial policy decisions in Government both at home and in the world. For instance, the war in Iraq, the decisions to liberalise gambling and licensing laws in the UK, to -introduce university tuition fees – all of these areas of Labour Party policy would have put me on the wrong side of the line for the then Party leadership.

That would, of course, also have meant that my influence on the Cyprus issue both in the UK and in the European institutions would have diminished, and my involvement could perhaps have even damaged the Cyprus cause with some national policy makers. However, I have always had one abiding regret, and that was that the work for Cyprus had not been completed.

So what has been the impact of the fulfilment of Cyprus' European vocation on the Cyprus Question.

I do not resile from the underpinning assumption.

Cyprus within the EU is a strong unifying factor for Cyprus itself and for the wider region.

The penultimate chapter of our book, chapter 11, was titled Future perspectives: stability in the eastern Mediterranean. In it ray and I argued that *'a united Cyprus in the EU, and Turkey with a clear path to membership, offers the tantalizing prospect of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus co-operating together inside the EU. Therein resides the real hope for stability in the region. It would be a key contributor in helping Greece and Turkey to put aside their regional competitiveness and begin to develop synergy for the development of the region in and through partnership in the EU. Such a symbiotic relationship would be helped and supported by the other EU Member States. Then the EU really would be able to offer something more substantial to the wider region through its members with significant expertise and knowledge of the region, its strengths, weaknesses and political structures. Even the likelihood of such a possibility should be enough to ensure that the players in the game should not allow the problem of Cyprus to stand in their way.'*

That chapter finished by saying *'In a global environment full of instability, unpredictability and shifting power balances nothing could be a more positive and hopeful sign for world peace'*.

Eight years later, the events in north Africa in the last few weeks have made that analysis more important than ever.

If we didn't know before, we know now that the 21st century is going to change politics as we know it and quickly.

The dramatic events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain and Yemen in the last few days and weeks have been driven by the use of new technology. New tools for bringing people together, instant communications between disparate groups or with the rest of the world, have shown how power can be wielded in the hands of ordinary people.

No one can have failed to be moved, and to admire those who stood against the armed force of the state – and won. And no one can have failed to be dismayed and appalled by the sight of a tyrant turning the might of the state against unarmed or poorly armed civilians asking for political change and greater freedoms and democracy.

As a result the Middle East is now even more unstable, and unpredictable with shifting power balances. The outcome of which is still to be decided.

Similarly, ‘the wiki-leaks’ drama that made public secret documents between key political players in the world, or exposed the real views of leading politicians on the leading politicians in other countries, have proved that it is increasingly difficult to keep secrets in a digital world, and done more to demean and undermine political processes that have been established for generations, and which ordinary people find increasingly obsolete and outmoded.

At the same time, economic and political power in the world is shifting away from the United States and the stronger of the individual European countries, and moving to China, India and Brazil in particular.

In the last six months as part of my current role as President of the International Co-operative Alliance, I have travelled to each of those countries. It is fascinating to see that whilst the western countries have been struggling with financial collapse, economic recession, and increasing levels of cuts in public services, joblessness, and rising levels of despair, countries like China, Brazil, and India have still been recording respectable and even high levels of growth, and increasing prosperity.

The world is as it always has been a world of two halves, except that the halves are for the time being standing on their head!

So the world is changing. In the scale of things the Cyprus issue is a small problem, but its implications for the lives of individuals are none the less painful and heart rending.

In my view, the answer to solving the division of the island remains firmly rooted in the fact that the Republic of Cyprus is now deeply embedded within the European Union. The values that brought the EU together and which remains the glue that hold it together are about democracy, justice, human rights, the rule of law, social rights and above all the rights of the individual. All of these are drawn together in a Treaty enforced by a properly constituted judicial system, with rights of access, complaint and appeal to Courts, Parliament and Government.

So just how can the ethos and values of the EU continue to support the solution to the Cyprus issue?

The key elements of the Cyprus question are well know and much debated over the decades since 1964. How can the European process support and augment some of those outstanding issues on which the trust and confidence of both communities must rest.

Given the evolution of society, political concepts and realities in the last ten or fifteen years I would contend that we simply are not giving enough emphasis to the European commitment to the protection of the rights of the individual.

Firstly, let us look at the implementation of, and accountability for European legislation.

Cyprus joined the EU as one country, albeit one country which contained a section of its geographical territory over which the recognised Government did not have control. But ultimately if Cyprus is to be united, it will have to be represented in Europe by one voice, not two. After all the distinct and diverse regions of Belgium are represented in Europe by one political voice not many, even if that one political voice is often expressed in different languages. Similarly the four increasingly devolved nations in the United Kingdom are represented in the EU by one voice.

How then, can the European process be harnessed to create that common voice for Greek Cypriots, and Turkish Cypriots, whom it seems both share the European vision. Inherent in that common voice will be the European guarantee for the rights of the individual within Cyprus regardless of ethnic origin. There has to be common ground particularly when it comes to considering implementation of laws such as financial regulation, or competition policy, or consumer protection or public health laws, the environment and so on. Because there is only one set of laws for the whole of the EU. Yes, there may be transitional periods for full implementation – such is the flexibility of the European model, but ultimately there can only be one voice for each Member State – one body that is both responsible and accountable for the implementation of these laws on behalf of the country. And the European Union's part of that bargain is that each individual has identical rights of complaint and redress against their own Member State – a right that is regularly used by individuals or through class actions through the European judicial system.

Secondly, let us move on to governance.

Governance is the expression and implementation of European values and rights in practice: democracy, free popular elections, a free media, the three freedoms – free movement of people, goods and services, once again backed by the rule of law.

The events in the North African states in recent weeks have demonstrated what the ultimate outcome will be for those who rule by dictat. What is crucial is that the governance of a state has to be understood, legitimized,

owned and defended by all the people with out external interference. Good governance is a fundamental element for membership of the European Union.

It is no coincidence that one of the early actions of the former Warsaw Pact countries when they broke free of the Soviet yoke, was to apply to join the EU. They wanted to root their infant democracies within the European Union, and to lean on the guarantees of individual rights contained in the European Treaty. Similarly many of those countries who fell out of the former Yugoslavia seek similar shelter despite their recent turbulent past.

Whilst the EU does not seek and indeed cannot by virtue of the Treaty itself, define the detail of governance arrangements in each Member State, it clearly requires certain key principles of governance to be present in one of its Member States. Described in the most general principles this incapsulates an open and free democracy, recognized as operating in a stable, efficient and effective manner by the majority of its people and, of course, it must be understandable by its people!; civil control over the armed forces of the country; a lively civil society; an independent judicial system; and a open electoral process with a free and fair media.

This contains the guarantees for individuals that they are part of a wider European value system backed up by the rule of law.

Finally the issue of security. This concept is arguably the one that has evolved the most in the last ten to fifteen years. Security is now perceived in a wider sense and yet paradoxically in a more individual sense. It is no longer purely a military term describing the defence of a nation state, but rather has moved to the security of the individual.

People and society want to have security of their health and prosperity, the right to freedom of expression and to education, with the need for security of the media and technology being some of the most recent.

It is commonplace to discuss threats to future security in terms of the movement of people – Cyprus, Italy, Malta, Spain and many of the other Mediterranean states are subject to a growing pressures from the influx of boat people, illegal immigration and so on. There is increasing issues of threats to the security of our energy and water supplies, from climate change and to the environment.

Seen in that context, the whole debate in the terms around security that has bedeviled the Cyprus problem can be seen as outmoded and almost old fashioned. Yes, of course, the security of all people needs to be

ensured. But surely the guarantee of 27, that has seen peace and stability between some of the most military and warlike countries in the world for nearly 60 years, is more effective than the guarantee of 3, that has led to military intervention, occupation and division for 37 years.

Given the trend to individual rights and responsibilities, the European Union could do much to change the nature of the debate, but in so doing demonstrate that its role for its Member States is to guarantee and support individual rights as described above, and in conducting that debate they begin the process of developing greater levels of trust and confidence over time. With patience this could diminish reliance on the narrow interpretation of security. This is not a quick fix and would require time, energy and infinite patience, but the division of Cyprus has already demonstrated that those qualities exist in bucketsful on this island.

The stronger the Republic of Cyprus adheres to such underpinning value sets, the more attractive and appealing it will become to Europe, as well as to those Cypriots who wish to be part of an open society, in which they can take a full part, and of which they can be proud.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have had time over the last eleven years since leaving the European Parliament to reflect, consider and reconsider the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy that I worked to in an attempt to make a difference in the search for a solution to the Cyprus question; the positions I took in the Parliament: with the other political groups: my discussions in the White House and the US State Department; and with the Government, Parliament and military High Command in Turkey. I have gone carefully through the many debates, consultations and meetings that I had within my own political party in the UK; and with Greek and Turkish Cypriots in London, the UK and around the world.

On careful reflection two things remain absolutely clear to me:

Firstly, that no matter how long the present fragmentation of the island continues, it is not in the best interests of either Greek or Turkish Cypriots and contains within it the seeds of further conflict;

And

Secondly, there is great will amongst the majority of the people of both communities to see an end to the present stalemate.

But what is also clear is that there are individual vested interests on Cyprus that for complex political and business interests do not wish to

see a solution. In this they are aided by the geo political strategic interests of some of the world's larger powers for whom Cyprus is a small and inherently unimportant clog in a global dynamic. What importance it does have is that it lies in a strategic position in one of the most volatile and yet resource rich parts of the world. On balance for those powers, the status quo in Cyprus offers a considerable strategic advantage with no particular threat, and until such time as it does, they are content.

However, ladies and gentlemen, I continue in my belief that the peaceful unity of Cyprus will be achieved.

Thank You.

Ends.