

DEMOCRACY ACCORDING TO MR. TALAT

*Michael Attalides
Rector, University of Nicosia*

In his recent interview (Politis 8th January 2009), Mr. Talat expressed views about the meaning of democracy which can only be described as deceptive. At one point, Mr Talat argues that since there is agreement in the negotiations on equal representation of the two communities in the Senate and in the judiciary, there could and should also be equality in the executive.

It is true that equal representation of the constituent units in the upper house is a frequent arrangement in federations as federation constitutes a democratic and effective amalgam of the principles of citizen equality and state equality. Equality of representation in the upper house expresses the element of equality of the constituent units. However there is no mention in Mr Talat's interview as to whether he accepts that the principle of citizen equality should be effectively expressed in the lower house.

As for equality of representation of the two communities in the judiciary, this is in fact an element which is peculiar to the Cyprus negotiations, however it does not crucially affect democratic balances. Equal representation of the communities in the executive, however, has no place in a democratic federation, nor is it included in the United Nations definition of community equality. Equal representation on the executive level is an inter-governmental phenomenon, and its presence implies relations between sovereign states or confederation, rather than democratic federation.

At another point, Mr Talat rejects the direct popular election of President and Vice-President on a common electoral list on the grounds that it contradicts, not only the "acquis" of "bicommunality" which is peculiar to the Cyprus negotiations, but also "basic democratic ideals", and because with such a constitutional arrangement the leader of the Turkish Cypriots would be elected by the Greek Cypriot voters.

According to Mr. Talat, the peculiarities of the "Cyprus negotiation acquis", such as the extension of the principle of communal equality at the expense of the universal democratic principle of citizen equality does not contradict basic democratic ideals, while a system which exists in virtually all democratic federations does. According to this way of thinking the Obama-Biden ticket was not democratic since the Afro-American candidate was elected by white votes.

In any event, the proposals which have been made from time to time for a common electoral list do not involve the election of the Turkish Cypriot leaders by the Greek Cypriots. They merely create mechanisms for cross-voting which involve on the one hand acceptance of "bicommunality", but also try to build into the election of Turkish *and* Greek Cypriot officials, a proportion of votes from the other community, which constitutes an injection of democratic character and normality conducive to the stability of a future political system.