

1. A TRADITION OF CONFLICT

"The Cypriots", wrote the humorist George Mikes, "know that they cannot become a World Power; but they have succeeded in becoming a World Nuisance, which is almost as good". Few Cypriots would find this witticism enjoyable; but the truth is that this small island of 3,572 square miles — roughly the same size as the Lebanon, or Puerto Rico, or the English counties of Norfolk and Suffolk combined — periodically hit the world's headlines because trouble, usually of a violent kind, broke out there.

Cyprus has a population of 650,000, which is made up of several ethnic groups. There is a Greek Orthodox community (about 80 per cent of the population), a Turkish Moslem community (about 18 per cent), and smaller Maronite, Latin and Armenian minorities. The two main communities have been in conflict with one another, and vowed allegiance to, and sought the help of, Greece and Turkey respectively -- two allies in NA 10. A third ally, Britain, ruled the island until 1960, and since then she has maintained important military bases there. Further, the close proximity of the island to the Middle East has made it a matter of keen interest, and occasionally concern, to several neighbouring countries, and also the United States and the Soviet Union. Thus, Cyprus came to signify to the world's politicians and journalists a place of trouble, and moreover trouble with inter-national repercussions out of proportion to her size and population.

How is it that the Greek and Turkish communities have found it impossible to achieve permanent peace for themselves and their 'Mother Countries'? How is one to understand those ideological, political and other factors which have been at the root of so many tragedies, the latest of which is still continuing? These are grave questions which Cypriots, and other students of Cypriot affairs, will not find easy to answer. The sequence of events that started with the landing of Turkish mainland troops on the island on 20th July 1974 is not some-thing that bears its own explanation, or even description, on its face for all intelligent observers to see. Greek Cypriots have called it a barbaric invasion of their island by a foreign country whose object was to impose a constitutional settlement under which the Turkish Cypriot minority would obtain possession of a large and rich part of territory.

Turkish Cypriots have welcomed it as an operation (indeed, a "peace operation") by Mother Turkey to establish a just solution to the long-standing intercommunal conflict, guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Turkish Cypriot community that had been suppressed by the more powerful Greek community. The ways in which these two sides saw and described these events, the vocabulary and explanations each of them used, reflect something of their respective images of themselves and attitudes towards each other. This study will try to show how the different, and opposing,

self - images and attitudes of the two main communities of Cyprus have been part of the cause of so many tragedies.

In attempting to understand the nature and sources of the inter-communal conflict in Cyprus it is well to begin by setting out, in the form of a brief historical sketch, certain more or less undisputed facts concerning the relations between Greeks and Turks, especially since 1960, when the island became an independent Republic. Certain elements in this sketch will then be highlighted and a number of questions raised. The substance of this study consists of an attempt to answer these questions.

During her 4,000-year recorded history, in which she was pre-dominantly inhabited by Greek people, Cyprus was conquered, or otherwise acquired and ruled by several foreign powers in succession. In 1571 she became part of the Ottoman Empire *and* a limited Turkish settlement followed. In 1878, through the Congress of Berlin, Britain was given the administration of the island to return for a guarantee to defend the Ottoman Empire against Russian aggression. In 1914 the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of the Central Powers, and Britain annexed Cyprus. The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 confirmed her new status, and in 1925 she was declared a Crown colony. Cyprus continued under British rule until 16th August 1960, when she achieved her independence under a Republican Constitution.

According to the Constitution "the State of Cyprus is an independent and sovereign Republic with a presidential regime, the President being Greek and the Vice-President being Turk elected by the Greek and Turkish Communities of Cyprus respectively (article 1). The President was to appoint seven Greek Government ministers, and the Vice-President three Government ministers. Of the 50 members of the House of Representatives — the legislative body — 70 per cent were to be Greeks, elected by Greek voters, and 30 per cent Turks, elected by Turkish voters. The President and Vice-President had separately and conjointly the power of final veto over legislation, and decisions of the House of Representatives and of the cabinet, on foreign affairs, defense and internal security. Further, all bills imposing duties or taxes required separate simple majorities from the Greek and Turkish Representatives before becoming law.

Two more provisions of the Constitution should be noted. First, all governmental, administrative and state posts, including the Police Force, were to be apportioned, at all levels, on the principle of 70 per cent for the Greeks and 30 per cent for the Turks — except for the 2,000-strong Army in which the ratio would be 60:40. Second, the five main towns of Cyprus would be split into Greek and Turkish municipalities, each empowered to raise its own taxes to finance its own public services.

These two provisions aroused great resentment among the Greeks who put forward various arguments for refusing to implement them. The Turks retaliated by refusing to pay taxes and using their vote to block financial legislation. The Greeks demanded the removal of those elements in the Constitution, which they regarded as 'negative', 'unworkable' or 'unjust' — if

not with Turkish consent, then unilaterally. In January 1963 Archbishop Makarios, the President of the Republic, abolished the separate municipalities which had existed de facto since 1958 and established unified 'improvement boards' under Government control. The Turks retorted immediately by setting up municipal councils of their own. Both actions were declared illegal by the Supreme Constitutional Court.

Unrest was building up throughout the year: there were student demonstrations, mysterious bomb explosions, inflammatory speeches and newspaper articles, rumors concerning the formation of armed groups within both communities. Some Greeks demanded not merely changes in the Constitution, but the union of Cyprus with Greece. On the Turkish side there was resistance to Greek demands, and indeed some called for the partition of the island between Turkey and Greece. The Greek and Turkish members of the Government frequently met separately.

In August 1963, President Makarios announced his intention to seek the revision of the Constitution. He solicited international support, particularly among Afro - Asian countries, and it was rumoured that Britain herself would raise no objections to such a move. The Turkish leaders were alarmed, and toured the countryside warning their people to be ready to fight in defence of their rights.

On 30th November 1963 President Makarios put forward a set of 13 proposals for amending the Constitution. Among the proposed changes would be the ending of the Presidential and Vice - Presidential veto, the dropping of the separate majorities requirement in the House. The abandonment of the 70:30 principle in the Civil Service and Police in favour of a ratio which corresponds to the actual proportion of the Greek and Turkish populations and the establishment of unified municipal councils.

On 16th December, the Government of Turkey rejected the Greek move, and soon after the Turkish Cypriot leadership did the same. Five days later, a small incident sparked off a flare - up and the two communities were fighting each other. The Turkish members of the Government, the House of Representatives, the Civil Service Police and arms left their posts and withdrew into the Turkish quarters of Nicosia, Famagusta and certain other areas which they turned into armed enclaves. Soon afterwards, thousands of Turks left their homes in Greek or mixed areas and retreated into these enclaves.

In January 1964, Britain called a conference in London, in an attempt to bring about some kind of rapprochement between the Greek and Turkish sides. The Greeks offered the Turkish community a minority status within a unitary state, the Turks demanded the division of the island into a Turkish and a Greek part and the conference ended in complete failure. In the following few months, violent clashes occurred in various parts of the island, in which armed policemen and irregulars from both sides committed indescribable excesses.

In March 1964 the United Nations sent a Peace - keeping Force to act as

observer and defusers of tension. Nevertheless, major and minor fighting continued intermittently until the end of 1967, when Greece and Turkey came to the brink of war. At the beginning of 1968 Archbishop Makarios proclaimed new Presidential elections and asked for a mandate to negotiate with the Turkish side a new constitutional settlement on the basis of an independent, unitary State. He received more than 95 per cent of the Greek votes, and for the next six years talks were being held between representatives of the two communities. Although substantial progress was made, the talks eventually got bogged down on the question of the relation between the Central Government and the local, community - based administrations. This was the situation on the eve of the coup by the Greek Cypriot National Guard which on 15th July 1974 overthrew (temporarily) President Makarios, and which was followed five days later by the landing of Turkish troops in the island.

These facts would be acknowledged by both the Greek and Turkish sides, although each would put a different interpretation or colouring on many of these. Three points in particular should be highlighted and amplified a little, because they raise important questions concerning the attitudes of the Greeks and Turks towards each other, and the Cypriot State.

1. An implication of the Constitution, which became disconcertingly clear during the first three years of independence, was that the Greek and Turkish members of the Government and the Legislature were, generally speaking, people who represented the interests of, and were principally responsible to, their own particular communities. Although they were all, in a sense, Cypriot leaders, the very constitutional arrangements under which they reached public office were such that their Greekness or Turkishness were of fundamental importance. In the Civil Service and Police, again, recruitment had to be made partly on criteria of the ethnic identity of the applicants. The Constitution of the independent, integral and unitary Republic of Cyprus was, in effect, the Constitution of a Greek - Cypriot - cum - Turkish-Cypriot State. The two communities were seen as the two sharers of the power, resources and wealth of the State.
2. Given the spirit of bicomunal sharing which informs the Constitution it is important to understand the nature and consequences of (a) the 'mechanics' of sharing — the different institutions, structures and other arrangements which aimed at regulating the sharing, and it') the sheer arithmetic of the share-up Both these points will need to be looked at later. There is just one simple demographic fact that may as well be stated now. According to the last official census. Which carried out in December 1960, Greek Orthodox made up about *80 percent of the* population. Turks 18.4 per *cent*, and *the tiny* Maronite, Armenian, Latin and other communities the rest For the purposes of elections, job apportionment ere these tiny minorities are included in the Greek community, in this extended sense, then, the Greek community comprised all the non -

Turkish portion of the population of Cyprus. i.e 81.6 per cent of the total According to the Demographic Report for 1970, prepared for the Government of Cyprus despite a continuous population increase the proportion of the Greek and the Turkish communities remained 81.6-18.4.f

3. Violent intercommunal conflict with the consequent separation began when, towards the end of 1963, the Greeks tried to change certain elements in the Constitution which dealt with Greek - Turkish sharing. The Turks resisted the changes in the belief that this constituted an attack on their rights and interests as a community. Within their armed enclaves the Turks eventually set up their own mini-State leaving the official State, the one which enjoyed recognition from foreign countries, entirely in the hands of the Greeks. Despite long years of negotiations, the Greek and Turkish sides failed to reach a final agreement on a new Constitution for Cyprus, and so the two communities remained in a state of (imperfect) de facto separation.

These points raise several questions, which are crucial to our understanding of the Cyprus conflict. In the following pages, I shall discuss three questions, which are variously related to the preceding remarks, and which provide some clues as to the mercur of the conflict. My three questions are the following:

1. Why was the 1960 Constitution framed on the principle that the Cypriot State was the joint property not of all its citizens, but of its two main communities, which were consequently conceived of as the two sharers or partners in the exercise of political power and responsibility, and the distribution of *resources* and *wealth*?
2. Why did the Greek and Turkish communities not co-operate within the various institutions of the Republic, with the consequence of bringing about the collapse of the constitutional order in December 1963?
3. Why was there no settlement achieved between the Greek and Turkish sides despite arduous negotiations from 1968 to 1974?

To answer these questions it is necessary to make clear how the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus have each conceived of their own national identity: what it means (as a rule, at least) to a Greek Cypriot to be Greek, and to a Turkish Cypriot to be Turkish. It is often inevitable to speak generally of 'Cypriots', or the people of Cyprus', but such expressions may be a bit misleading if they suggest that the 650,000 souls now living in Cyprus form one people, a nation characterized by a sameness of language, culture, religion or political loyalty. If these commonly accepted criteria of nationhood are applied to the people inhabiting Cyprus, they will have to be divided into different national or ethnic groups. The crucial point, however, is that the two main ethnic groups which are to be found in the island are thought of by their members as being not 'self-contained' Cyprus-based nations, but integral parts of larger nations. Traditionally at least, the 80 per cent of the Cypriots

have been very conscious of their Greek language. Greek culture and history, and Greek Orthodox religion, and these things make them not Cypriots who just happened to have had Greek origins, but Greeks living in Cyprus, and as such member, of the larger Greek nation. Analogously, the 18 per cent have thought of themselves as Turks living in Cyprus, and members of the larger Turkish nation. Thus, although Andreas and Ali may be natives and residents of Cyprus, and regard the island as their common homeland, they do not normally regard themselves as compatriots, but rather as neighbours.

The last sentence should not be misunderstood. Greeks and Turks have many things in common, including a love and pride for their Cypriot homeland. Again Greeks and Turks may be members of the same local community – until July 1974 there were as many as 48 mixed villages in Cyprus – or professional organizations, or other groups. After all, common loyalties do not have to be based on membership of the same nation, and people cherish friendships and other kinds of relationship even though *they* may not be compatriots. The point remains, *however*, that Greekness and Turkishness, even when these characterize people born and bred in Cyprus, constitute different national identities. National consciousness among Cypriots has traditionally been either Greek or Turkish; and the assertion of national consciousness and pride, in other words nationalism, has traditionally been either Greece-orientated or Turkey-orientated. To see why this is so, we must first understand the character of Greek nationalism itself, as it has developed in Greece; and to gain this understanding it is necessary to acquire some minimal familiarity with modern Greek history.