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Chairman: Mr. Miguel Rafael URQUIA (El Salvador).

AGENDA ITEM 68


GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. SHANAHAN (New Zealand) said that the Cyprus question had resulted in prolonged and unprofitable discussion within the United Nations because of uncertainties concerning the proper limits of the action of the General Assembly and the changing forms in which the question had been submitted. At the twelfth session, there had been a demand for the exercise of self-determination by the people of Cyprus. At the present session, enosis (union with Greece) was disavowed as an objective of Greek policy and the Assembly was asked to make a recommendation in favour of the island's independence.

2. Superficially the solution appeared attractive, since as an independent State Cyprus would be maintained as a single geographic and political unit. His delegation, however, considered that the General Assembly should give great caution in its response to the demand for independence. British sovereignty over Cyprus was long established and universally recognized and the United Kingdom had not requested the Assembly's assistance in shaping the island's future. An Assembly recommendation in favour of independence could therefore be rejected by the United Kingdom as an intrusion on its sovereign territorial rights. That objection could not be countered with assertions that the Cyprus question was merely a colonial problem and that the United Kingdom was seeking to perpetuate its political domination of the island. The United Kingdom had given striking proof of its enlightened policy towards its dependent territories, a policy which had been fulfilled in the last two years in three countries which had become Members of the United Nations and which would be joined in 1960 by others. Moreover, with respect to Cyprus itself, the United Kingdom had undertaken to apply the principle of self-determination.

3. The regrettable events of the last five years had clearly shown that the United Kingdom and the people of Cyprus were not the only parties at present involved in the settlement of the Cyprus issue; the conflicting national interests of Greece and Turkey had also become involved. In that regard, he urged the parties concerned to heed the wise and valuable advice given by the representative of the Federation of Malaya at the previous meeting when he had said that a peaceful solution of the Cyprus question must be based on co-operation between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots and between the three countries concerned, whose action towards Cyprus should be based mainly on the principle of the welfare of the Cypriots.

4. The United Kingdom plan, which had been put forward following the failure of attempts to settle the Cyprus question by negotiation and which had been rejected by Greece and accepted with certain qualifications by Turkey, contained two valuable elements. In the first place, by providing the communities of Cyprus with opportunities for self-government, it would prepare the Cypriot people for the decision on their ultimate destiny. In the second place, it provided a breathing space in which a reconciliation of interests and views could be attempted among the parties.

5. Despite terrorism, efforts were now being made in Cyprus to develop institutions of self-government, and his delegation hoped that those efforts would be successful.

6. His delegation felt that the most constructive course of action open to the General Assembly was to recommend that the parties concerned should continue their efforts to seek a solution by negotiation. Such a course would fulfill the function of the Assembly as a centre within which international relations could be harmonized.

7. The Assembly should not, in his view, endeavour to lay down a single and specific basis for the settlement of the Cyprus question. Such a course of action would not command preponderant support within the Assembly and, by elevating one solution above others, was likely to diminish, rather than to enhance, the possibility of reconciliation among the three countries concerned, which were bound by close links and with all three of which New Zealand had special ties.

8. His delegation did not dismiss independence as the basis on which the Cyprus problem might ultimately be solved. It was one of the possible solutions of the problem, but independence as a slogan and independence as a solution should not be confused. Whatever the ultimate solution, however, the first essential was that progress should be made as rapidly as possible towards self-government in Cyprus; that alone could provide the foundation for a decision by the Cypriots which would be free of doubt and imprecision.

9. In the interests of the inhabitants of Cyprus and of the maintenance of international peace and security, the General Assembly should aim, not at formulating any single basis of settlement, but at creating the atmosphere in which the search for a settlement could proceed most favourably.

A/C.1/SR.1001
10. Mr. SOBOLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the people of Cyprus demanded liberation from United Kingdom rule and the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with the United Nations Charter. However, the United Kingdom authorities were maintaining their control of the island by force of arms and were using it as a base to support their collapsing colonial position in the Near and Middle East.

11. The United Kingdom had completely ignored the resolution on the Cyprus question adopted unanimously by the General Assembly at its eleventh session (resolution 1013 (XII)), which had called for the resumption of negotiations in order to achieve a peaceful, democratic and just solution of the problem. The Cyprus issue was once more before the Assembly because the United Kingdom was continuing to employ terror and violence in order to deny the people of Cyprus their freedom and independence. The United Kingdom was also resorting to various manoeuvres in an effort to gain time and hamper a solution of the problem. Thus, the so-called Macmillan plan, announced by the United Kingdom Government on 19 June 1958, sought to maintain the status of Cyprus as a British colony for the next seven years. It was another attempt to delay the granting of self-determination to the island’s inhabitants even at the expiration of that period. At the same time, it provided for the establishment of separate Greek and Turkish communities on Cyprus for the obvious purpose of fanning antagonism between the two groups in accordance with the old imperialist principle of "divide and rule".

12. The United Kingdom Government had depicted its new plan as one based on partnership among the United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey and the people of Cyprus. In reality, the plan had nothing in common with the interests of the people of Cyprus; Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had acknowledged in a recent speech that it was simply intended to remove the Cyprus question from public discussion for the next seven years. The people of Cyprus, led by Archbishop Makarios, had repudiated the plan and reaffirmed their desire to exercise their right to self-determination. The Greek Government, too, had rejected the plan as an attempt to prolong the United Kingdom’s colonial domination of the island. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom authorities, acting in conjunction with Turkey, had already begun to implement it.

13. The United Kingdom had turned Cyprus into a huge concentration camp in an effort to maintain its colonial rule. Its primary objective was to retain its military bases on the island, which were used to carry out the aggressive plans of the North Atlantic bloc and to suppress the national liberation movement in the Near and Middle East; two years ago, Cyprus had played a role in the aggression by the United Kingdom and France against Egypt and, more recently, in the armed intervention by the United Kingdom and the United States in Jordan and Lebanon. As Sir Anthony Eden, the former United Kingdom Prime Minister, had made clear in a speech delivered on 1 June 1956, Cyprus was also vital to the United Kingdom and the North Atlantic bloc as an instrument for safeguarding the supply of oil from the Near and Middle East. The establishment of an atomic base of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on Cyprus was a particularly grave threat to the people of that island and of the entire region.

14. The Macmillan plan could not possibly solve the Cyprus problem, since it did not take into account the desires of the island’s population. After the Greek Government had rightly rejected it, the United Kingdom’s NATO partners, led by the United States, had tried to force concessions from Greece and induce it to attend a conference with the United Kingdom and Turkey on implementation of the plan. By openly supporting the United Kingdom’s efforts to maintain its colonial regime in Cyprus, the leaders of NATO had demonstrated once again, at the recent meeting of the NATO Council, that the purpose of that organization was to destroy the freedom and independence of peoples.

15. As Mr. Khrushchev, the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, had indicated in a recent statement, the Soviet Union’s position on the Cyprus question was governed by the basic principle of Soviet foreign policy that all peoples were entitled to decide their own destiny without interference from outside. The Soviet delegation would accordingly support those proposals in the Committee which sought to grant the Cypriot people their right to self-determination, independence and freedom.

16. Mr. MOD (Hungary) said that the United Kingdom, both in the past and in drawing up the new Macmillan plan, had never consulted the people of Cyprus on that island’s future. When the Cypriots had ultimately been forced to take up arms in the struggle for freedom, the United Kingdom had resorted to the methods of bloody colonial repression against them. The United Kingdom’s efforts to maintain its control of the island had made it impossible to solve the Cyprus problem in the spirit of the United Nations Charter, namely by granting the Cypriot people the right to self-determination. The resolutions so far adopted by the United Nations on the matter had been based on the assumption of the United Kingdom’s good intentions; they had merely called for negotiations among the Governments concerned and had alluded only vaguely to the Cypriot people’s right to self-determination. Henceforth, it must be made clear that the Cypriot people was the proper arbiter of the question of Cyprus.

17. In June 1958, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Colonies had betrayed the colonialist character of his Government’s policy on Cyprus by declaring that the Treaty of Lausanne,2/ in recognizing the United Kingdom’s sole sovereignty over Cyprus, had given it the right to do what it liked on and with that island. The United Kingdom Prime Minister, in presenting his new plan to Parliament, had thrown further light on his Government’s policy on Cyprus by stating that one of its main purposes was to safeguard the British bases and installations in the island, which were necessary to enable the United Kingdom to carry out its international obligations. The fact that the Cyprus bases had been used in the United Kingdom’s aggression against Egypt and Jordan showed just what sort of interna-

tional obligations Mr. Macmillan had had in mind. The United Kingdom wanted to continue using Cyprus to threaten the peace-loving peoples of the Middle East.

18. The Macmillan plan had been devised in an attempt to freeze the present status of Cyprus for seven more years. At the same time, the United Kingdom was encouraging nationalist enmity between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, who had lived together in harmony for centuries, in order to perpetuate its colonial rule.

19. The United Nations had thus far been unable to solve the Cyprus problem because it had been guided primarily by the interests of the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey. Only by taking into account the interests of the Cypriot people and granting them their right to self-determination could the question be settled in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

20. Mr. NOBLE (United Kingdom) said, in reply to the remarks by the representatives of Poland (100th meeting), the Soviet Union and Hungary concerning military bases in Cyprus, that British strategic requirements in Cyprus did not constitute a serious obstacle to either an interim or a final solution. Not only were those requirements moderate and easily met, but they had been generally accepted by both Greece and Turkey as valuable and necessary to stability and security in the area. The two regional pacts, in the interests of which the United Kingdom bases were largely maintained, were entirely defensive in character. Cynical and irrelevant accusations of war-mongering would not deceive the Committee, nor were they likely to advance the solution of the problem.

21. His delegation had examined with interest the Colombian draft resolution (A/C.1/L.225). His delegation, however, agreed with that of the United States (100th meeting) that the complicated and explosive problem of Cyprus was not one which the United Nations could reasonably be asked to take over; it was a problem for the parties concerned, who were friends and allies and had recently come so near to agreeing on an international conference.

22. As several delegations had referred to a phrase about "the united personality of Cyprus" which he had used in his opening statement (996th meeting), he would like to make quite clear the context in which that phrase had been used. A study of his statement would show that he had been speaking of the detailed provisions of the British partnership plan, such as the provision for a single Governor's council, with a Greek-Cypriot majority, responsible for the affairs of the island as a whole. His purpose had been to point out that those provisions would ensure that there was no danger of the island drifting into separatism during the seven-year period.

23. It must be made quite clear, however, that "the united personality of Cyprus" remained an ideal; care must be taken in the General Assembly to do nothing to exacerbate the strong inter-communal passions which continued to threaten that ideal. There had never yet been any Cypriot nation or any specifically Cypriot national sentiment and it might be said that the bullets of EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters) were the surest way of ensuring that there never would be.

24. The debate so far had revealed a general unanimity on two fundamental points. It had been acknowledged on all sides that Cyprus was an international as well as a colonial problem and that no settlement could be contemplated which did not take account of the interests of all the parties concerned. It had also been acknowledged that, in the present state of tension, only an interim settlement was possible. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece had accepted that principle in his opening speech (996th meeting), on two conditions: that the interim settlement should not prejudice the future and that it should enable progress to be made towards self-government. As he had already stated, the policy of partnership put forward by the United Kingdom was designed to safeguard precisely those conditions.

25. Mr. ZORLU (Turkey) said it was erroneous to suggest, as some delegations had tried to do, that the issue in Cyprus was between a colonial Power on the one side and a united people on the other, or that the Turkish community had become a party to the dispute only through the instigation of the colonial Power. No useful purpose could be served by speaking of the existence of a united Cypriot nation, as the Greek Parliament had itself recognized, and it was quite un-true to suggest that the United Kingdom plan was designed to separate the Greek and the Turkish communities; for those communities had always lived wholly separate lives on the island; they had always managed their communal affairs separately and they were economically entirely independent of one another. He could prove by photostats of petitions from the Turkish community going back to 1800, which were in his possession, that the Greek community in Cyprus had always tried to hold the lead over the Turkish community in island affairs and that the Turkish community had strongly resisted those attempts in order to maintain its position of equality with the Greek community. The United Kingdom plan therefore did not alter the relations existing between the two communities, but endeavoured to reorganize them on a more democratic basis.

26. Everything that had been said concerning the role of the United Kingdom in inciting the Turkish population of the island was completely inaccurate. Until very recently the Turkish community in Cyprus had shared in the long historical life of Turkey and it possessed a highly developed, mature and active national consciousness which could not be manipulated at will by any outside Power.

27. Mr. AVEROFF-TOSSIZZA (Greece) said he regretted the statement just made by the United Kingdom representative, which seemed to withdraw the support for the concept of the island's unity he had expressed at an earlier meeting. That tactic of offering something and then withdrawing it was the best evidence that negotiations would be impossible unless the basis for a solution was laid down, even if only broadly, in advance.

28. The Greek Government had agreed that a transitional period might be necessary, provided that any interim arrangements made fulfilled the two conditions of not prejudging the future of the island and of being essentially democratic. Mr. Noble claimed that those two conditions were completely met by the United Kingdom plan. But the very notion of a three-Power condominium over the island was intended to prejudice the future, while the provision that the representa-
tives of the two foreign Governments were to assist the Governor in the performance of some of his duties was an obvious alienation of sovereignty over the island. Moreover, as even British jurists had acknowledged, the United Kingdom plan, far from making any effort to unite the majority and the minority, was full of features designed to pit them against each other.

29. He disagreed completely with what the Turkish representative had just said concerning the relations between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus. Those relations had always been excellent; so excellent in fact that in 1931, when there had been a Greek revolt against the British authorities, escaping Greeks had been hidden by Turks. It was true that at present tension existed between the two communities. That was why the Greek Government agreed that there should be a transitional period during which that tension would be reduced, and laid down that it should be a fundamental principle in determining the final status of the island that the minority should not only have full cultural and religious independence, but should participate fairly in the island's administration and government.

30. It was true that the two communities lived separate cultural and religious lives. That separation was natural and would undoubtedly be maintained. Where unity was necessary, and where it would be destroyed by the United Kingdom plan, was in the administration of the island's general life. Created by geography and history, that unity had always existed and should continue to exist.

31. Mr. ZORLU (Turkey) read out a passage from one of the petitions he had referred to, which proved the existence of friction between the two communities before the present century. It had been possible to maintain the harmony between the two communities of Cyprus only because of the policies of the British High Commissioners, who had for many years endeavoured to maintain the equilibrium based on equal representation of the two communities.

32. The Turkish population had shown no animosity towards the Greeks in 1931 because the then Greek Government had had no desire to subject the Turkish population of the island to its rule. It was only when such a desire was manifested by one community that animosity was evoked in the other.

33. With regard to the argument that the United Kingdom wished to perpetuate the dispute because there were British bases on the island, he would point out that the Greek Government had given repeated assurances that it would maintain those bases. The fact that the United Kingdom Government still hesitated despite those assurances was proof that the problem was more complicated and had its roots in Greco-Turkish relations.

34. Mr. AVEROFF-TOSSIZZA (Greece) noted that the Turkish representative had acknowledged the agreement between Turks and Greeks existing in 1931, even though he attached his own interpretation to it. With regard to the separation of communities, he would point out that, although a large Greek community existed in Egypt, that did not mean it considered itself completely separated from its Egyptian compatriots.

35. If the Turkish representative was so convinced that the communities had always been divided he should agree to the establishment of a commission of investigation proposed by the Colombian representative (1000th meeting) and so often called for by Greece, which would provide the United Nations with an impartial evaluation of the situation.

36. Mr. ZORLU (Turkey) said that he was prepared to accept the Colombian proposal and would ask the Greek representative in his turn whether he was prepared to accept the Colombian draft resolution (A/C. 1/L.225) as a whole.

37. Mr. AVEROFF-TOSSIZZA (Greece) said that he would accept the draft resolution as a whole if it defined the terms of reference of the proposed commission, for without such a definition there was reason to fear that the establishment of the commission would only prolong the situation in Cyprus. He asked whether the Turkish representative would agree to the commission, which would at least establish the facts of the situation.

38. Mr. ZORLU (Turkey) said that he would accept the Colombian draft resolution as a whole, but could not agree to accept only what was desired by the Greek Government. His delegation had come to the United Nations to discuss the question and to seek a compromise. The draft resolution was a whole and could not be broken up into separate parts. The meeting rose at 5 p.m.