The Indigenous Foreigner: British Policy in Cyprus, 1963-1965

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Abstract

This article examines British policy in Cyprus between December 1963 and December 1965, primarily through material at the Public Record Office in London. By viewing Britain as occupying the paradoxical position of being neither a foreigner nor indigenous to the island, the historian can come to understand the development and manifestation of British policy in Cyprus. The author contends that British policy was ad hoc and unshackled by long-term objectives. This policy was motivated by a concern to maintain the peace on the island and appearing as a neutral between claims made by the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities. Undoubtedly, Britain wanted to retain its influence in Cyprus, an influence that had been secured in the founding documents of the Republic. Caught in a period of rapid decolonisation and of protracted adjustment to its newfound status as a second rank great power, the effervescent situation in Cyprus afforded an opportunity for the questioning of the nature and extent of British self-interest at the highest echelons of Her Majesty's Government. Insofar as Britain was the major player in Cyprus during the period under consideration, the effect of Cold War considerations are best captured in British and not US policymaking.

Keywords: British foreign policy, 1963-65, Sovereign Base Areas, 1963 crisis in Cyprus, Cold War, Enosis, UNFICYP

Introduction

The twin concepts of 'decline of nerve' and 'identity crisis' used by historians to explain policymaking, as well as the fluidity of the regional and international context between 1963 and 1965, set the scene for an understanding of British policy in Cyprus. The 'decline of nerve' appears to lie behind almost every major action that Britain undertook in the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East post-Suez, which was to linger heavily for the next two decades.[1] Coupled

1 "Experience of post-Suez military intervention for British policy makers was also psychologically traumatic." Nigel J. Ashton (1997) 'A Microcosm of Decline: British Loss of Nerve and Military Intervention in Jordan and Kuwait, 1958 and 1961', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4, p. 1070.

to this was the 'identity crisis' concept that historians use to explain British indecision. The rapid decolonisation (twelve countries of the Empire gained independence between 1960 and 1964) and the policies of the Colonial Office to paper over cracks by lumping territories together in federal relationships "did not succeed in combining unity and desire".[2] Add to this the well-documented domestic problems of Britain – rise in unemployment, consecutive sterling crises, sex and security scandals such as the infamous June 1963 Profumo Affair – and the image which emerges is one of a country desperately trying to come to grips with a new world order.

There are three main arguments that run through this article: firstly, that Britain still perceived itself and therefore acted as a great power in the region, secondly, that its policy could not have been anything else but ad hoc – albeit that continuity *can* be seen in the objectives of retaining influence (primarily through the Sovereign Base Areas)[3] and of appearing as a neutral, honest broker in the attempts to solve the Cyprus problem – and thirdly, that Cold War facts shaped the efforts to solve the island's quagmire.

The overarching theme in British policy concerning Cyprus was to achieve the fragile balance that would ensure peace and stability; in short, a policy of neutrality was pursued. Mallinson correctly identifies the British objective as one of hanging on "through thick and thin".[4] It would be a gross exaggeration to present Britain acting in a pre-meditated manner, sure of the results of its policies and definite in its wants. In any historical analysis, room must be made for the ever-present factor of 'reaction', although this does not imply an absence of initiative. An explanation for the continued ambiguity and reaction in British policy can be located in the fact that Cyprus was not high on the British agenda; rather, the island was important in the sense of its geographical position: that is, at one of the many Cold War crossroads conjured by Western policymakers. Moreover, the differences of opinion within the British government, and particularly that between the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Foreign Office made a straightforward and uncomplicated policy unlikely.

The oxymoron 'indigenous foreigner' is used because it seems to encompass the apposite characterisation of the relationship Britain had with post-independence Cyprus. Britain is a 'foreigner' in the sense that it had only recently (1878) become involved in the history of the island and had never 'Anglicised' it to any significant extent. Britain is 'indigenous' to the island because it possessed Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) of ninety-nine square miles plus the so-called Retained Sites, as well as a respectable size of British nationals residing on the island. It also left behind a legal code and an administrative infrastructure upon which the new state was founded; a new state that Britain promised to guarantee along with two countries whose ethnicities comprised the vast majority of the island's population.

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2 Alan Sked and Chris Cook (1983) *Post-war Britain: A Political History*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 175.

3 This argument is also found in James Ker-Lindsay (2004) *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis 1963-1964*. Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis.

4 William Mallinson (2005) *Cyprus: A Modern History*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 90.

Britain did not, therefore, completely abandon Cyprus to its own machinations; Cold War realities and the loss of Suez meant that the island had a role to play in the wider picture. Cyprus was no adequate substitute for Suez, and to retrospectively assert the opposite would be to endow more importance on the role of the SBA than necessary.[5] The claim by Hitchens that the violence of December 1963 proved that the "British were finally and definitely replaced, as the main outside arbiter, by the United States", is mistaken.[6] It is a contention of this article that Britain was the major player in Cyprus, especially given the Treaty of Guarantee and the presence of the SBA that provided Her Majesty's Government a permanent closeness with the events in Cyprus. The term 'indigenous foreigner' is employed in another sense as well: that is, Britain could be seen to act both swiftly and unilaterally to avoid the worst, very much as if it was indigenous to the island as opposed to a mere Guarantor Power or a former colonial master (Section I). However, this phase was not to last; both because of internal and external contingencies, Britain gradually tried to share the burden of the Cyprus crisis (Section II).[7] By the end of 1965, Britain was exasperated by the deadlock (Section III) and the United States came into the picture all the more conspicuously after this.

SECTION I

Britain Alarmed: The Thirteen Points, British Military Action and the London Conference

Our story begins with the rendezvous of two neophytes: a fledgling Cyprus Republic that was in a state of crisis and a new government to deal with in Britain. The two-month-old Conservative government of Alec Douglas-Home was faced with the "constitutional and ethnopolitical"[8] crisis that erupted in Cyprus on Christmas Day in 1963. The mere fact that a Cabinet meeting was adjourned on Boxing Day is revealing both of the importance Cyprus had in British policymaking in the region and of the perceived intensity of the crisis. The latter can be attributed to the fact that Cyprus was a bourgeoning republic counting barely three years of international existence. It was not the crisis *per se* which concerned Britain the most, but the possible escalation into a general

5 Argument in Wm. Roger Louis (2004) 'Britain and the Middle East after 1945' in L. Carl Brown (ed.), *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris. The SBA were increasingly used as NATO early warning facilities and wireless stations necessary for a worldwide network of military communications, and not as a primary launching pad for military operations.

6 Christopher Hitchens (1988) *Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger*, 2nd edition. London: Noonday Press, p. 56.

7 Also in James Ker-Lindsay (2004) *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis 1963-1964*. Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis.

8 Joseph S. Joseph (1997) *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics. From Independence to the Threshold of the European Union*. Great Britain: Macmillan, p. 43.

conflagration in the area. Such an occurrence would prove to be catastrophic for the security of the area, not only in the sense of an intra-NATO Greco-Turkish war, but also due to the possible repercussions such a conflict would have on the future of the region: "For better or for worse, Britain had been given an explicit role to ensure that Cyprus did not ignite a larger problem".[9] A brief look at the incident that inflamed the crisis is warranted, namely, the Thirteen Points of President Makarios for the amendment of the Cypriot constitution.

What actually happened within the 'Britain – High Commissioner Arthur Clark – President Makarios' triangle in November 1963 remains unresolved. An exchange of notes containing the proposals by Makarios between Britain and Clark on the one hand, and Clark and Makarios on the other occurred in November 1963. The result was that Makarios thought that he had secured British approval of the proposed amendments, which he proceeded to present to the Turkish-Cypriots and the Guarantor Powers on 30 November 1963.[10] Makarios failed to see that Clark and Britain were not synonymous. Mallinson makes the probable claim that Makarios was "emboldened" by the help given to him by Clark,[11] and it is not a great leap of faith to claim this as evidence of British duplicity. British reception of the Thirteen Points was, however, not favourable. A laconic "No" was all that was written in response to the question as to whether Makarios had consulted London about the proposals .[12]

What seemed to be a misunderstanding as to British wants and an eagerness by Clark to help Makarios out with the Thirteen Points was the cause for a further deterioration of bi-communal relations within the island. Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots felt excluded from government and vulnerable to the whims of the Greek Cypriots. To claim that the "prelude to the 1963-4 disturbances had been, in a sense, inscribed in the provisions of the 1960 constitution"[13] would be going too far. Such determinism is unhelpful to historical analysis and hinders rather than encourages debate.[14] A diametrically opposite view is found in Reddaway who claims that the December events were "obviously planned and premeditated ... sanctioned by the Archbishop and

9 James Ker-Lindsay (2004) *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis 1963-1964*. Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, p. 9. I insert the quote here with caution: assuming a role may be too weak to explain why Britain acted the way it did, a deficiency I try to redress via my characterisation of Britain as an *indigenous* foreigner.

10 In a meeting with Clark on 19 December 1963, Clerides thought (and subsequently relayed to Makarios) that Clark was in favour of the Thirteen Points and that these were an example of "statesmanship". Glafcos Clerides (1989) *My Deposition*. Nicosia: Alithia Press, pp. 208-210.

11 William Mallinson (2005) *Cyprus: A Modern History*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 35.

12 PRO, PREM11/4139, FO Memorandum, 19 December 1963.

13 Christopher Hitchens (1988) *Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger*, 2nd edition. London: Noonday Press, p. 55.

14 Hitchens gallantly admits his emotionalism in the preface to the second edition: "I wrote this book in a fit of bad temper". Christopher Hitchens, *Ibid.*, p. 2.

his cabinet".[15] The multi-faceted explanation elaborated by Joseph is sounder; ethno-political polarisation inherited from the past, the structural inadequacies of the Cyprus Republic, the lack of experience in self-government and the absence of a prudent political leadership which could transcend ethnic differences were the major factors which shed light on the breakdown of government.[16]

The Treaty of Guarantee, which was part and parcel of the 1960 Cyprus constitution, was a double-edged sword for Britain. Were British troops to intervene and calm things down before further escalation, "the present goodwill towards the British would probably cease and would consequently greatly increase the threat to the Sovereign Base Areas, Reserved Sites and to British families".[17] The High Commission also warned the Commonwealth Relations Office that "we must decide now what our answer would be to an appeal for military intervention".[18] Indeed, Britain often found itself in the middle of impossible situations, being asked to help one side or the other. For example, the Turkish-Cypriot Defence Minister of Cyprus, Osman Orek, pleaded with the Acting High Commissioner in Nicosia to help his community from being exterminated by the Greek Cypriots. A tripartite plea by the guarantor powers which urged the two communities to display moderation and cease the sporadic fighting proved unsuccessful. This pressed Britain to reassess its stance of 'diplomacy first, action later', to conclude that "we see no alternative to military intervention by the three Guarantor Powers to restore order provided that the Cyprus Government can be persuaded to invite us to do so".[19] As soon as President Makarios had accepted the proposal for the tripartite force, Douglas-Home called a meeting of Ministers to review the situation on Boxing Day, 1963. At the meeting it was decided that an armoured squadron from Libya and a battalion from the Strategic Reserve in Britain were to be sent to Cyprus.[20] The force was spearheaded by British General Young and was so effective that by the afternoon of the next day, all inter-communal fighting had ceased.

Britain then turned to the task at hand: how to disengage from the ungraceful peacekeeping role.[21] Unfortunately, unlike what had happened in the Jordan and Kuwaiti cases, there was to be

15 John Reddaway (1986) *Burdened with Cyprus: The British Connection*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p.146. R.A. Patrick confirms Reddaway: "there can be no doubt that a similar incident would have been precipitated by Christmas." *Ibid.*, p. 137.

16 Argument in Joseph S. Joseph (1985) *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Concern*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

17 PRO, PREM11/4139, MOD to Commander of British Forces in Cyprus, 24 December 1963.

18 PRO, PREM11/4139, Nicosia to CRO, 21 December 1963.

19 PRO, PREM11/4139, FO to Ankara, 25 December 1963.

20 PRO, PREM11/4139, Minutes of Meeting of Ministers, 26 December 1963.

21 Although the Joint Truce Force was meant to be tripartite in nature, with Greek and Turkish contingents under the command of Young, it remained tripartite only in name. Britain's peacekeeping was an ungraceful role because it invited grievances from Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots alike, which is characteristic of positions of neutrality in general.

no indigenous (or, for that matter, external) action to allow Britain to extricate itself.[22] Nor was peace to be had on the Island since there were indications of a Turkish build-up of armed forces on the south coast of the island, in conjunction with over-flights conducted by the Turkish air-force.[23] Sir David Allen,[24] Britain's Ambassador in Ankara, urged his government to act with moderation. Britain concurred and no representations to the Turkish government were made. This is another example that exemplifies the reactive, as opposed to the pro-active, nature of British policy as events unfolded. Britain may have been quick to act in Cyprus, but there was no blueprint for future action.

The issue soon began to fan out to the United Nations (UN) as Zinon Rossides, the Greek-Cypriot Permanent Representative of Cyprus at the UN, proceeded to make representations to Secretary-General U Thant. British attitude to UN involvement was ambivalent. The fact that U Thant remained opposed to any UN involvement in Cyprus[25] was a mixed blessing for Britain: on the one hand it allowed for freedom of movement as regards the Cyprus issue, while on the other it laid all the responsibility on London. The Foreign Office outlined the negative attitude of the British government towards possible UN intervention. The "unfortunate consequences" of the Congo experience where UN troops were unsuccessful and the possibility of a loss of "virtually all control over future developments" was raised, as was concern about the Afro-Asian element in the UN seizing "any opportunity to try to oust us altogether from the island" using the Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) as an excuse. The Foreign Office thus arrived at the conclusion that Britain should "do everything possible to persuade the Cyprus Government to accept the Tripartite offer of good offices" and that "we would probably be wise not to involve any third party at this stage".[26] The insistence on tripartite action was in line with the Treaty of Guarantee that required consultation amongst the guarantor powers with the general aim of the "mutual abandonment of the conflicting ethnopolitical goals of enosis and partition".[27]

Liquidation of commitments to Cyprus was indeed proposed by none other than the Prime

22 A comparison is made here due to the chronological and topographical proximity of the two countries to Cyprus, not to mention the involvement Britain had had in all of these countries in modern history.

23 The information first came from Ankara on 27 December 1963 and was confirmed the following day in a telegram from Nicosia. PRO, PREM11/4139, Nicosia to CRO, 28 December 1963.

24 PRO, PREM11/4139, Ankara to FO, 28/12/63. Allen thought Turkish manoeuvring was of a defensive and not of an offensive nature.

25 PRO, PREM11/4139, New York to FO, 27 December 1963.

26 PRO, PREM11/4139, FO to Ankara, 27 December 1963.

27 Joseph S. Joseph (1997) *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics. From Independence to the Threshold of the European Union*. Great Britain: Macmillan, p. 21. I find this approach to be much more useful than that of Mallinson who argues that the Treaty of Guarantee handicapped the independence of the Republic. True as that may be, the *raison d' être* of the Treaty outlined by Joseph is enough justification for the necessity of its existence, as the continuous violence on the island proved.

Minister's personal Secretary Sir Oliver Wright who noted that, "our commitment to Cyprus is becoming both undesirable and unnecessary". Not only was there "something terribly old fashioned about our whole military thinking about the bases", but "we should consider handing over the whole problem to the United Nations" if the peace operation failed.[28] Proposals of retrenchment were not to be had, however. Britain did not relinquish its responsibility, as C.M. Woodhouse argues, but attempted to share it;[29] the distinction is crucial. Nonetheless, the success of the peace-keeping force urged Britain to proceed with a political initiative. Although there was an acknowledgement that "the present Constitution is proving unworkable",[30] no other alternative was hammered out and Britain tried to remain faithful to the 1960 Agreements. This had already been made clear at the Boxing Day Cabinet meeting: "military action could only stabilise the position; it offered no solution to the longer-term problem of the constitution of the island, which required a fresh political decision".[31] Although by no means evident at the time, the tripartite force was to prove to be the precursor of the much wider United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) that still survives to this day.

Contrary to the self-admission of being guilty to the accusation of "most reluctant premier of the twentieth century",[32] Alec Douglas-Home and his government launched a virulent effort to solve the Cyprus crisis. The effort was not taken solely in the name of wider Western interests, nor was it a half-hearted attempt to find a solution to what would become a chronic issue. Nicolet claims that the overarching theme of British policy was its inability to find a role in Cyprus. As a result, it portrayed a relaxed attitude to ground-shaking events such as the Thirteen Points controversy and was merely concerned for its SBA.[33] Whereas Reddaway is guilty of not paying enough attention to the importance of the SBA, Nicolet does quite the opposite. British efforts can truly be characterised 'British' in the sense that they were not taken in the name of wider Western interests alone, nor were they coordinated with the United States. British self-interest was the guiding hand, a self-interest already secured in the 1960 Agreements. Moreover, qualms existed, as expressed by the reticent nature of a statement by Douglas-Home to his Cabinet: "If the Turks

28 PRO, PREM11/4139, Minute to the Prime Minister from Oliver Wright, 27 December 1963. Such a proposal was at once radical and unpopular among officials of Her Majesty's government.

29 "British responsibility remained, under the letter of the Treaty, although Britain did nothing to honour it." C.M. Woodhouse (1986) 'Cyprus: the British Point of View' in John T.A. Koumoulides (ed.), *Cyprus in Transition: 1960-1985*. London: Trigraph, p. 91. Woodhouse proceeds to blame Britain for the consequent events in Cyprus, including the 1974 Turkish intervention.

30 PRO, PREM11/4139, Prime Minister's Personal Minute to Commonwealth Secretary, 27 December 1963.

31 PRO, CAB130/195, Meeting of Ministers, 26 December 1963.

32 Peter Hennessy (1996) *Muddling Through: Power, Politics and the Quality of Government in Post-war Britain*. Great Britain: Indigo, p. 235.

33 Argument in Claude Nicolet (2001) 'British Policy Towards Cyprus, 1960-1974: A Tale of Failure or Impotence?', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring), pp. 89-101.

invade, or if we are seriously prevented from fulfilling our political role, we have made it quite clear that we will retire into base".[34]

As an indigenous party to the island, Britain tried to solve the problem by presiding over a short-lived conference in mid-January 1964 under the initiative of Commonwealth Secretary, Duncan Sandys. However, it did not bode well that the British government could not agree on a single interpretation of the intentions of the Greek and Turkish governments, not to mention those of the Greek Cypriots. The Prime Minister thought Turkey to be moving towards de facto partition, while the Foreign Secretary thought the Turks to be opting first for a federal solution, then perhaps for partition.[35] Partition of Cyprus was not an option at the time since it would render the British presence on the island invalid. A personal minute by the Prime Minister constitutes evidence of this: should partition occur following a deadlock in a Constitutional Conference, then "there will be no need for Guarantors and our presence in the Island for any reason other than our own military convenience would be superfluous".[36] Indeed, with Greece and Turkey both being members of NATO, it could safely be assumed that the two 'mother' countries would sufficiently control their respective communities. Britain was once again faced with the perennial issue of the last decade: an irrecoverable loss of power and prestige. In addition, the instability of domestic politics and regime changes in both Turkey and Greece hampered British efforts to conclude what the best way to deal with the 'mother' countries would be. Meanwhile President Makarios proceeded to be conveniently ambiguous about his wants in a stalling effort that he thought would give him the vantage point. Add to this the inability of Britain to act as a power broker in the region as it had once done, and the recipe for confusion and misinterpretation was complete.

The subject of the SBA was inadvertently raised at the conference because of the crisis since constitutional revision had the potential of compromising the legality of the bases. Indeed, whether the bases were desirable or not, was another point of contention within the establishment. As one would expect, the Ministry of Defence and the Chiefs of Staff did not wish to see their removal since "this could well create additional tensions in the area to the detriment of our interests".[37] The Treasury, however, thought that the severe economic strain Britain was under would be considerably relieved if overseas commitments were lessened.[38] NATO was another complicating factor because "NATO infrastructure installations in Cyprus are regarded as part of the British military element on the Island".[39] Crucially, this implied that neither the Greek nor Turkish

34 William Mallinson (2005) *Cyprus: A Modern History*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 37.

35 PRO, CAB21/5280, Record of a Conversation between PM and Robert Kennedy, 27 January 1964.

36 PRO, PREM11/4139, Prime Minister's Personal Minute to Commonwealth Secretary, 27 December 1963.

37 PRO, CAB21/5280, Memo by H. Godfrey of MOD, 7 January 1964.

38 Cf. Oliver Wright's view cited above.

39 PRO, FO371/179083, Minute by A.G. Munro, 1 January 1964.

military presence on the island could sufficiently guarantee the interests of the North Atlantic alliance.

Sandys accurately summed up the paradoxical situation at the conference: "... the Greeks had put a lot of influence on the Greek-Cypriots who were being very unreasonable, while the Turkish-Cypriots, who were being more reasonable, were being encouraged by the Turkish Government to be intransigent".[40] Joseph has pointed out that, "the two sides participated as two competing ethnic blocs rather than as four parties".[41] Either way, matters did not portend well either for the prospects of a solution or for British disengagement from the processes they had themselves initiated to protect their interests. The failure of the January conference to bear fruit meant that Britain would not try to solve the problem alone. Henceforth, Britain acted in a manner more akin to a foreigner than that of a native.

SECTION II

British Ambivalence and the Search for a Political Solution

The general pattern as regards British manoeuvring after the January 1964 Conference could be likened to a tug-of-war. On one side of the rope tugged British incapacity to bring about a solution to the Cyprus problem without the help of any other powers, while on the other was British determination not to appear as a non-independent actor. British pride was taking a battering, undergoing as it were a transformation that would finally lead to the end of empire in 1971 (albeit unclear by any means in 1964). The Foreign Office continued to operate within a Great Power mindset: "our international aims over the Cyprus problem should be not only to preserve the NATO alliance and retain our bases, but also to secure a climate of opinion to the establishment of British bases elsewhere if this should eventually prove necessary".[42] An incisive look at this statement reveals that British aims were not only defensive (such as the use of the words "preserve" and "retain" suggest), but also pro-active: 'securing' a favourable 'climate of opinion' undoubtedly meant positive action on the worldwide front. Britain successfully undermined the Greek-Cypriot effort to rush the problem to the UN by putting the issue to the UN first, thus minimising the damage of the Cypriot intentions to frame the problem of the island within "the concept of the sanctity of sovereignty and territorial integrity which has become something of a shibboleth at the UN".[43] In other words, Britain had the procedural advantage at the UN over the government of Cyprus.[44]

40 PRO, CAB21/5280, Meeting held in presence of PM, 26 January 1964.

41 Joseph S. Joseph (1997) *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics. From Independence to the Threshold of the European Union.* Great Britain: Macmillan, p. 46.

42 PRO, FO371/174768, Minute by A.R. Moore, 20 April 1964.

43 PRO, FO371/174762, Minute by R.E. Parsons, 26 February 1964.

44 James Ker-Lindsay (2004) *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis 1963-1964.* Bibliopolis: Mannheim and Möhnesee, p. 79.

Broader Cold War considerations persisted to hover in the mind-frame of policymakers. In the case of "an armed foreign invasion of Cypriot territory, the Soviet Union will help the Republic of Cyprus to defend its freedom and independence against foreign intervention", wrote the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in February 1964.[45] The assertive tone of the letter sent by Khrushchev was rather misleading in light of the subsequent inactivity of the Soviet Union in Cyprus. Thus, it would not be unfair to include the letter as a propaganda move typical of cold war politics. "In London, the letter was simply regarded as a standard response, and did not cause alarm", Ker-Lindsay has argued.[46]

Nonetheless this was not clear at the time and six months later, when the possibility arose of transferring (at least part of) the British Home Fleet from the North Atlantic to the Mediterranean, the content of the letter resonated in the minds of British policymakers. Their fears were bolstered by the "recent evidence of a Soviet naval and military build-up in the Eastern Mediterranean in connection with Cyprus", and also by the emergence of "the possibility of a need for a naval blockade of the Island".[47] The possibility of communist subversion hailed from within the Island as well. Given that "the Cypriot economy depends to a great extent on the presence of British forces on the Island" largely complicated things since it meant that "a large scale withdrawal would, unless accompanied by economic aid, upset the economy and have political repercussions". The political repercussions meant a possible seizure of power by "the only efficiently organised party" of the island, the Communist Party AKEL.[48] Of course, this fits in with the ideological appreciation of how communism worked: not only that it was inherently expansionist but that it principally blossomed in beleaguered economies. This was yet another by-product of the Cold War mentality.

UNFICYP was not regarded as a solution to the Cyprus problem.[49] British diplomats still pained to secure a more permanent solution. Financing the UNFICYP was a constant source of trouble for London.[50] Indicatively, "before expressing our willingness to contribute to a third period we should have at least the assurance that the Americans will repeat their own contribution as well

45 Quoted in William Mallinson (2005) *Cyprus: A Modern History*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 37.

46 James Ker-Lindsay (2004) *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis 1963-1964*. Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, p. 66. Ker-Lindsay notes that, "the letter nonetheless appeared to reduce the effectiveness of the [Truce] Force." *Ibid*., p. 70.

47 PRO, FO371/179021, Minute by A.G. Munro, 24 August 1964.

48 PRO, FO371/168991, K.D. Jamieson of FO to D.J. Crawley of the CRO, 8 July 1963.

49 Ker-Lindsay documents the recalcitrance Britain had had towards UN peacekeeping since the fighting had started in Cyprus. James Ker-Lindsay (2004) *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis 1963-1964*. Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, p. 31. Britain had also rejected a request by the UN Secretary-General to have a representative present at the London Conference. *Ibid*., p. 46.

50 U Thant had made it clear early on that the UN would not foot the bill for the maintenance of UNFICYP. James Ker-Lindsay (2004) *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis 1963-1964*. Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, p. 71.

as support the renewal of the mandate", wrote Boyd-Carpenter of the Foreign Office.[51] Therefore, Britain looked to its closest ally for reassurance, much more after the failure of the US-sponsored Acheson Proposals of summer 1964 for the solution to the Cyprus problem. Britain itself could not opt out of UNFICYP, given that Her Majesty's Government was still considered to be the major power with a vested interest in the Island.

Britain was self-conscious in order not to appear as the former colonial power dictating its will. This was emphasised by the Prime Minister to United States (US) President Lyndon Baines Johnson in February 1964, in reply to the US proposal for a Conference between the Guarantor Powers.[52] However, by the autumn of 1964, the Foreign Office was worried lest the Secretary-General assumed a wider role in the Cyprus issue; "We have always understood his object to be to reduce tension in [the] matter affecting bilateral Greco-Turkish relations".[53] The problem with this was that the de facto government of Cyprus, the Soviet Union and Turkey were all pushing for greater UN involvement. British determinacy to appear as an independent actor was being constantly undermined. However, the political recommendations made by the UN were not to British liking. The appointed UN Mediator, Galo Plaza, was disposed to reject extreme solutions such as *Enosis*, exchange of populations, partition or a federal state.[54] Furthermore, during a visit to London, Plaza emphasised "that any solution of the Cyprus problem must be built around Archbishop Makarios".[55] This was unsuitable to British methods of involving the guarantor powers over and above the wishes of Makarios, and posed a problem once Plaza published his report in March 1965.

Nonetheless, Britain remained in the prominent position as regards the issue of Cyprus and wanted to stay there. This status was expressed in the Anglo-American relationship, as the Western superpower was quite happy to allow Britain to deal with their former colony. As in Jordan in 1958 and in Kuwait in 1961, the US was content enough to allow Britain the leading role. In fact, it demanded that Britain take measures appropriate to its special interests in the island: "I think that the British are getting to where they might as well not be British anymore if they can't handle Cyprus", said a disparaged Lyndon B. Johnson.[56] Whereas the Acheson proposals can certainly be characterised as evidence of a growing US involvement in Cyprus, the historian must be careful not to conflate this initiative with an assumption of responsibility for Cyprus by the US.

As the summer of 1964 approached, Whitehall was coming round to the fact that either

51 PRO, FO371/174762, FO Minute by T.A. Boyd-Carpenter, 8 September 1964.

52 PRO, CAB21/5280, FO to Washington, 19 February 1964.

53 PRO, FO371/174759, FO to UKDEL to NATO, 14 July 1964.

54 PRO, PREM11/4701, CRO to Nicosia, 2 May 1964.

55 PRO, FO371/174770, Minute by R.E. Parsons, 27 November 1964.

56 FRUS, 1964-68, Vol. xvi, Telephone Conversation between President Johnson and the Under Secretary of State (Ball), 25 January 1964.

Enosis with Greece or a unitary state with untrammelled majority rule would best achieve the security of the SBA.[57] The new High Commissioner of Britain to Cyprus, W.H.A. Bishop, had pointed to this as early as April 1964; "I can see no alternative to bringing Turkey to accept the unpalatable fact that, short of military coercion, the Greek-Cypriots will have to be allowed to have their day".[58] In addition, by no means was there any certainty that 'Natofication' of Cyprus was the most ideal solution.[59] The Foreign Office was not in favour of transferring the SBA to NATO,[60] although it did not look badly upon the suggestion that the UN be given facilities in the SBA.[61] Britain had wished to "underline the sovereign nature of the Base Areas" when UNFICYP came into being in the spring of 1964.[62] Indeed, the assertion that the SBAs "have never formed part of the Republic of Cyprus and are not involved in the present dispute" was the staunch policy line of Britain throughout.[63]

By mid-June 1964, Douglas-Home asserted that, "We are increasingly – and possibly rightly – putting our money on Enosis as the ultimate solution".[64] This was happily seconded by events on the ground which were outside of British control, as the Foreign Office noted a decrease "in the likelihood of a Turkish intervention" which would have been accompanied by "a de facto intervention by the Greeks".[65] This is not to say that Britain had publicly disavowed itself of the attitude to neutrality, as was evident by the British refusal to pay one and a half million pounds due to Cyprus in July 1964 as had been stipulated by the SBA lease agreement. Paying the sum to the Cypriot government meant handing over a considerable amount of money to the Greek-Cypriot community that could be misused or abused. Conversely, to share this instalment with the Greek and Turkish communities or to attach conditions over payment would constitute a breach of the 1960 Agreements that legitimated the SBA.

Perhaps it was only inevitable that all the talk of Treaties and Alliances, not to mention the status of the SBA, would lead to a pervading legalism in the Cyprus issue. Questions such as whether "Enosis would automatically bring Cyprus within the NATO area"[66] were "not entirely

57 This preference coincided with the wishes of the Greek-Cypriots, as opposed to those in Turkey or the Turkish-Cypriots who preferred a federal state or partition.

58 DO 175/162, Nicosia to CRO, 21 April 1964.

59 PRO, CAB21/5280, Prime Minister's Personal Minute, 29 May 1964.

60 PRO, FO371/174762, Minute by J.A.N. Graham, 17 June 1964. Markides points out that neither the CRO nor the MOD was amenable to such a proposal either. Diana Markides (2000) *The Issue of Separate Municipalities and the Birth of the New Republic: Cyprus, 1957-63*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 133.

61 PRO, FO371/174762, Minute by E.J.W. Barnes, 12 August 1964.

62 PRO, FO371/174763, Minute by R.E. Parsons, 1 May 1964.

63 PRO, FO371/174762, Talking Points for British Foreign Secretary meeting with Galo Plaza, 25 November 1964.

64 PRO, CAB21/5280, Prime Minister's Personal Minute, 16 June 1964.

65 PRO, FO371/174766, FO to Washington, 9 July 1964.

66 PRO, FO371/174758, FO Minute by R.E. Parsons, 4 August 1964.

clear",[67] even if this was Britain's preferred solution at that moment in time. While it was evident that if the Soviet Union were to attack Turkey (should the latter invade Cyprus) "Articles 5 and 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty would *prima facie* apply",[68] Britain neither wanted to encourage Turkey into thinking that it could provoke a conflagration and thus present NATO with a *fait accompli* of having to support Turkey, nor to give the Soviets the impression that they could attack Turkey without any risk of escalation into a wider conflict. Once again, Britain found itself caught between Scylla and Charibdis, handicapped by its own impotence to act in the high-handed manner suited to a (waning) Great Power as itself. Furthermore, there was the problem of the conflict between UN law and the Treaty of Guarantee; sovereignty as preached by the UN did not fit in well with the said Treaty. The problem as to which of the two legal principles was superior proved so intractable that it remains insoluble to this day.

At this point, the need to address a very recent and emerging interpretation is considered prudent because of its possible implications. Martin Packard, a British naval intelligence officer sent to Cyprus in 1964, related the following episode between himself and Acting US Secretary of State George Ball: "Ball patted me on the back, as though I were sadly deluded and he said: That was a fantastic show son, but you've got it all wrong, hasn't anyone told you that our plan here is for partition?"[69] The citation was made as part of wider evidence that British undercover forces were involved in fomenting the conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots since 1964. Without ignoring the importance that first-hand accounts of events may have in historical research, the anecdote has the potential of being interpreted as evidence for a wider Western conspiracy to partition the island against the will of the local communities. Indeed, the majority of the Greek-Cypriot press was flooded with anti-British sentiment in 1964.[70] The dangers for historical analysis harboured by such an approach are palpable. Not only does the interpretation assume that the two Cypriot communities wanted to live together and were agreed on the form of government under which they would co-exist, it also mistakenly conflates British and American approaches into a uni-dimensional 'West'. Partition may, in retrospect, seem cold-blooded to any sensitive reader, but it is useful to keep in mind that the Republic under discussion was a fledgling one which even lacked wholehearted acceptance by the Greek-Cypriot majority that populated it. Certainly, *Enosis* was the solution preferred by the British; this solution did not mean the absence of "a cohesive unitary state" which Packard laments and is mistakenly seen as a panacea to the problems of Cyprus.[71]

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67 PRO, FO371/174758, FO Minute by M. Brown, 12 August 1964.

68 PRO, FO371/174758, FO to UKDEL to NATO, 2 September 1964.

69 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4632080.stm].

70 James Ker-Lindsay (2004) *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis 1963-1964*. Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, *passim*.

71 Quoted in Christopher Hitchens (1988) *Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger*, 2nd edition. London: Noonday Press, p. 6.

Evidence of British initiative honed towards *Enosis* is the fact that London had its own ideas about what type of settlement the UN should try to achieve in Cyprus. An exchange between Lord Lambton and the Prime Minister on 13 May 1964 is revealing.[72] The settlement which Lambton outlined, and Douglas-Home approved, included: a unitary state for Cyprus which should be encouraged to join Greece; accommodation of those Turkish Cypriots who wished to leave the island; Turkish Cypriots who remained should have their security and rights guaranteed by the UN; accommodation for a complete transfer of the 12,500 Greek population of Istanbul back to Greece; and that the Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) should remain either under Britain or eventually under NATO. Given that the UN showed the necessary "force to keep the two communities from fighting ... talks could be initiated between Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers towards agreement on such a settlement". The Prime Minister was wary as to whether this would be satisfactory enough for Turkey, since "they will want something for their prestige as well", but agreed that "things are moving in the general direction suggested in Lord Lambton's Minute". It is worthy of notice how the conclusions reached by Britain were starkly opposed to the aforementioned disposition of the UN to reject extreme solutions. Population exchange was being offered via linkage of the Istanbul and Cyprus issues. The contrast could not have been more blatant, given the staunch dichotomy made by Douglas-Home that "there were really only two possible solutions in Cyprus; one was enosis and the other was partition".[73]

By the end of 1964 the possibility of *Enosis* as a solution had diminished. This was not because Turkey was against it, but rather because the popularity of such a solution had waned in Greece. Makarios' presence at the Cairo Conference confirmed his drift to the Non-Aligned Movement, thus reducing his already diminutive attractiveness to Britain as an object of persuasion.[74] Britain privately asserted its decision "that there is no further useful step to promote Enosis in which Her Majesty's Government could take at the moment". Britain stuck to the position that "the British Sovereign Bases are not included in the Cyprus dispute" and that "we cannot conceive of a settlement which failed to provide for the continuation of British base facilities".[75] Moreover, the failure of US diplomacy in the summer had once again placed the Cyprus issue squarely in British hands. As Britain firmly remained the hub of the international efforts to solve the Cyprus problem – the twin visits by Plaza in October and November to London are indicative – there was a marked disgruntlement with the American efforts (and the subsequent lack of them after the summer). Britain believed the US thought "in terms of a stalling operation only" and did not "have any ideas about how to achieve a final solution to the Cypriot

72 PRO, PREM11/4700, Minute by Lord Lambton and Prime Minister's response, 13 May 1964. Douglas-Home instructed that Lord Lambton's minute be "fed into the Whitehall machine".

73 PRO, PREM11/4701, Record of a Meeting between Francis Noel-Baker and the Prime Minister, 4 June 1964.

74 PRO, FO371/174759, UKDEL to NATO, 5 October 1964.

75 PRO, FO371/174759, Speaking Notes for NATO Ministerial Meeting in Paris between 15-17 December 1964.

problem".[76] Although Britain had been relieved of the exclusivity of the burden for keeping the peace in Cyprus and the UN had accepted that the status of the SBA was "not an issue",[77] Britain refused to view UN intervention as the final word on the matter.

SECTION III

Resigning to Reality? British Acquiescence Increases

The dawn of 1965 harboured little hope for a solution to the Cyprus problem, as far as Britain was concerned. The year is remembered in the history of British foreign policy in the region as the time when the relinquishment of Aden became an inescapable reality. Subsequently, British policymakers awoke to the existence of an incongruity between actual British power and influence *vis-à-vis* the weighty responsibilities Britain had abroad. After a long spell of Conservative rule, the Labour government of the charismatic rhetorician Harold Wilson consolidated itself into power following its victory in the October 1964 elections.[78] Although there is an argument to be made for the increased willingness on behalf of the Labour government to abandon the Empire, for our purposes this cannot be exaggerated. Although the advent of a Labour government did mark a change in the presentation of policy, the strategic aims remained very much the same in the case of Cyprus. Continuity can be observed in the policy of neutrality and over the issue of the SBA. Given the constant flux of the Cyprus problem, the myriad of different proposals made to solve it, and the ad hoc policy Britain pursued, it was not to be expected that party ideology would come to sufficiently pervade the search for an accommodation.

Cold War attitudes and wider regional considerations penetrated the Cypriot problem. A manifestation of this twin truth can be observed in the February 1965 controversy regarding the construction of a fourth radio station in Iran. Iran was part of CENTO, an alliance that had evolved out of the Baghdad Pact of 1953, and had become important to the West as a valuable strategic ally in what was an otherwise volatile region. As Dockrill puts it, "by the mid-1960s CENTO's remaining value to the UK was in encouraging Iran to remain loyal to the West".[79] The fourth radio station would be built in the context of military aid by Britain to CENTO in addition to the SBA that were to be used by an air striking force to support the alliance.[80] The concern for Britain lay in potential Turkish reaction to the decision to build the radio station; "In

76 PRO, FO371/174772, UK Mission to UN to FO, 1 October 1964.

77 PRO, PREM11/4701, CRO to Nicosia, 2 May 1964.

78 Britain witnessed a change of Prime Minister, followed by another change of Prime Minister and party government; these were years of aberration as regards the frequency of governmental change in Britain.

79 Saki Dockrill (2002) *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World?* Hampshire/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 125.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

the Cyprus context we ought to be careful of Turkish susceptibilities", warned Sandys.[81] Britain did not wish to see a reduction of links between Iran and Turkey, both countries being vital allies of the West in the Middle Eastern theatre of the Cold War.[82]

Iran was not the only case where the all-embracing nature of Cold War politics seemed to penetrate the Cyprus situation. The Acheson Proposals, the Johnson-Inonu correspondence of June 1964 and the fact that during 1964-1965 Cyprus had received seventy million dollars worth of arms from the Soviet Union, are all incidents which cannot be explained without reference to the Cold War.[83] The attempt by the Soviet Union to deliver ground-to-air missiles to the Republic of Cyprus in March 1965 was a specific example of how the superpowers vied for space on the neutral geopolitical landscape. The effort proved abortive after Makarios succumbed to pressures from the US and Greece to refuse deployment of the missiles.[84]

A turning point in developments was the publication of the Galo Plaza Report on 30 March 1965. Earlier, Wilson had outlined British interests: "peace should be maintained in Cyprus, particularly during the period following the publication of the Mediator's report".[85] The UN Mediator made it clear that the most favoured solution to the Cyprus problem was going to be a unitary state. Peace remained the priority for Britain, though it felt that a brokered agreement between the two 'mother' countries was the best means to achieve this. Since the Plaza report ruled out *enosis*, double-*enosis* and partition, it placed constraints on the possible outcomes of Greco-Turkish negotiations. In addition, the report gave the Makarios government increased legitimacy in pursuing its aims, while taking legitimacy away from those who advocated either *Enosis* or *Taksim*. Meanwhile, by March 1965 reports from the SBA became increasingly concerned about military intervention in Cyprus by all sides. Specifically, possibilities such as jet fighters from either Greece or Turkey coming to the aid of their respective communities were tangible concerns for Britain. Another nightmare scenario was that of MiGs being donated by the pro-Soviet government of Syria to the government of Cyprus.[86] The belligerent press statements of Makarios did not help either; he would disallow "the British Bases which still exist in Cyprus to be used in any way whatsoever against the Arab world".[87] In May 1965 and with an undertone of fatalism,

81 PRO, PREM13/2206, Secret Memo from Commonwealth Secretary to Chancellor of the Exchequer, 19 February 1965. Sandys felt the need to dispatch the memo due to Treasury opposition to the building of the radio station because of economic reasons.

82 PRO, PREM13/2206, FO to Tehran, 20 February 1965.

83 Joseph S. Joseph (1997) *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics. From Independence to the Threshold of the European Union*. Great Britain: Macmillan, p. 54.

84 The incident is well-documented in Makarios Droushiotis (2005) *I Proti Dichotomisi: Cyprus, 1963-1964*. Nicosia: Alfadi, Ch. 8.

85 PRO, PREM13/1992, PM Minute, 5 March 1965.

86 PRO, CAB191/9, JiG (Cy) Intelligence Report, 12 January 1965.

87 PRO, CAB191/10, JiG (Cy) Intelligence Report, 13 April 1965.

intelligence reported that "military equipment continues to be brought in".[88] Meanwhile, the Chiefs of Staff had "advised that in the event of UNFICYP being withdrawn, British forces in Cyprus would have to be sufficiently reinforced",[89] thus arousing the spectre of increased overseas military commitments.

Thus, it was Britain which took the initiative and suggested a six month extension of the UNFICYP mandate in late June 1965. Despite concern as regards the cost of the force to Britain, it was obvious from the political point of view that, "of all the countries participating in UNFICYP we would seem to have the greatest national interest in avoiding its premature withdrawal".[90] Britain could not afford to police the island on its own, nor did it wish to relinquish its role and responsibility in Cyprus. The 'responsibility without power' thesis employed by Smith to describe British diplomacy in the Persian Gulf during the same period could be applied to this scenario. In Cyprus, Britain lacked the means to adequately protect its current status.[91]

Unlike the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence attached "the greatest importance to the continuation of UNFICYP as long as there is no political settlement".[92] This attitude persisted throughout 1965, as Defence Secretary Michael Stewart pained to explain to the Prime Minister: "I am concerned that our continued support of UNFICYP provides the best and cheapest method of preserving the peace in Cyprus".[93]

The Wilson government faithfully followed the policy of its conservative predecessors as regards the status of the bases and the role they played in the Cyprus issue. At a meeting between Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Cyprus Foreign Minister Spyros Kyprianou, the former said that "the bases were UK territory now and their future was a matter between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Cyprus".[94] From a legal perspective, the obvious point that would render talk about the future of the SBA futile was that the government of Cyprus was not one which was functioning in accordance with the constitution; hence its ability to discuss the future of the bases was a non-starter.

Moreover, inter-office rivalry was not lacking as regards whether or not the SBA could be part of a solution to the Cyprus problem. The Ministry of Defence argued that the defence review could not afford to be disrupted by a possible ceding of the SBA. The Foreign Office, however, suggested that the government should act fast and give up the Dhekelia base to Turkey as part of

88 PRO, CAB191/10, JiG (Cy) Intelligence Report, 4 May 1965.

89 PRO, FO371/179991, Defence Secretary to Prime Minister, 23 January 1965.

90 PRO, FO371/179990, Blue Minute, D.S.L. Dodson, 31 December 1964.

91 Argument in Simon C. Smith (2004) *Britain's Revival and Fall in the Gulf: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States 1950-71*. London/New York: Routledge Curzon.

92 PRO, FO371/179990, Blue Minute, D.S.L. Dodson, 31 December 1964. Dodson reported the attitude of the MOD in the Minute.

93 PRO, FO371/179991, Defence Secretary to Prime Minister, 23 November 1965.

94 PRO, PREM13/792, Record of a Conversation between Harold Wilson and Spyros Kyprianou, 20 June 1965.

a wider settlement, if such an occasion were to avail itself. The Cabinet and the Prime Minister sided with this proposal, and agreed on probing the possibility of using the SBA as a bargaining chip.[95] Here was an opportunity for Britain to appear as a self-sacrificing honest broker for the sake of peace, while simultaneously ridding itself of costly overseas commitments. Once again, British interests had coincided with the desire for peace and security on the island.

As time went on, the intractability of the issue at hand became all the more apparent. Given that "the rift between Makarios and General Grivas (was) no nearer being healed than it ever was",[96] Britain faced the issue of a split within the Greek-Cypriot leadership. This further dampened the prospects for coordination with local actors, which was a tenet of UN methodology towards a workable solution. For Britain, the importance of local actors was debatable when it came to the Turkish-Cypriot community, since "Turkish-Cypriot policy is clearly still closely controlled by Turkey".[97] Britain thought that if Greece and Turkey could agree on a solution, the respective communities on the island would follow suit. Nonetheless, it was not obvious that the 'mother' countries were up to the task, despite their common membership in the NATO alliance. Indeed, were it not so, the Treaty of Guarantee would have proved more effective given that it presupposed a sufficient unity of purpose amongst the guarantor powers.[98] The decision of the Greek government in mid-November 1965 to maintain all of the Greek troops present in Cyprus did not help defuse the situation. To its dismay, British intelligence observed that the Greek Foreign Minister had "clearly failed to wrest the initiative from Makarios: if anything he has been compelled, like his predecessors, to toe the Archbishop's line".[99] Turkey too had sworn in yet another new government under Prime Minister Suat Urguplu in March 1965, the legitimacy of which was under question.

Hope in a Greco-Turkish understanding over Cyprus proved to be misplaced. In July 1965 the negotiations between the two countries broke down as a result of political crisis in Greece. Interestingly enough, the talks had been directed towards the possibility of *Enosis* with territorial compensation in Greece for Turkey.[100] This vindicated the British preference for *enosis* in the sense that it was probably the most realistic solution which would satisfy British concerns for peace and security.

British reaction to the August 1965 suggestion made by the State Department to refer the Cyprus problem to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) showed that Britain was unwilling to

95 PRO, PREM13/792, Burke Trend of the Cabinet Office to J.O. Wright, 22 July 1965.

96 PRO, CAB191/9, JiG (Cy) Intelligence Report, 12 January 1965.

97 PRO, CAB191/9, JiG (Cy) Intelligence Report, 12 January 1965.

98 Argument made in John Reddaway (1986) *Burdened with Cyprus: The British Connection*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p. 155.

99 PRO, CAB191/10, JiG (Cy) Intelligence Report, 30 November 1965.

100 PRO, DO220/212, D.S.L. Dodson Minute, 30 November 1965.

neither allow the problem move beyond its realm of influence nor jeopardise the status of the SBA. The US calculated that a verdict by the ICJ would satisfy Cold War aims: it would both protect NATO interests and keep Cyprus at a safe distance from the Soviets. As before, Britain was worried that such an action would bring the 1960 Agreements under scrutiny, thus compromising the legal right of Britain to have a say in the future of the island. The Foreign Office instructed the embassy in Washington to "explain our hesitations to the State Department",[101] and the idea was dropped. Once again, this dispels the myth of concerted action in Cyprus which some accounts have claimed to be the defining influence on the course of the Cyprus problem.[102] As regards the status of the SBA, London wished the issue to be put on ice, since this would avert any negative ramifications such as local agitation about the Bases in other countries.

The Electoral Law of late July 1965 passed by the Cypriot Parliament in the absence of the Turkish-Cypriot MPs afforded Britain with yet another opportunity to display its policy of keeping the balance between the two communities.[103] Britain was swift to point out the constitutional override, concerned more with the progressive wresting of the state by the majority community rather than arguments regarding the workability of government that the Greek-Cypriots had put forth.[104] However, when one considers the private admissions by the members of Her Majesty's Government as regards the intractability of the Cyprus constitution, a case can be made for two-faced diplomacy on behalf of Britain. Here was an attempt at political 'plumbing' of a problematic constitution, which was never going to be a long-term solution. Although disparaged by this Greek-Cypriot action, Britain used its diplomatic clout to stop the Turkish government from asking for an early meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss the Electoral Law issue.[105] Such an action would prove an embarrassment to Britain as far as its relationship with President Makarios was concerned. This was not followed by further action as resignation had begun to sink in as the latter half of 1965 came in full sway: "We can do little more than continue our former policy of urging moderation on all sides".[106] The British High Commissioner in Cyprus, David Hunt, made a proposal that was indicative of the growing exasperation at the continuing deadlock; did Britain need to adhere to the line that a solution to the Cyprus problem must be acceptable to all parties concerned?[107]

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101 PRO, FO371/179984, FO to Washington, 7 August 1965.

102 Nicolet claims that by late winter 1964, the US had taken over the Cyprus problem from the British who now only cared for their sovereign bases. Claude Nicolet (2001) 'British Policy Towards Cyprus, 1960-1974: A Tale of Failure or Impotence?', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1, Spring, pp. 89-101.

103 According to the Electoral Law, provisions were to be made for elections to Parliament which would bypass the constitutional practice of separate elections by the two communities.

104 PRO, PREM13/792, CRO to Nicosia, 24/7/65.

105 PRO, PREM13/792, FO to Ankara, 29 July 1965.

106 PRO, PREM13/792, FO Private Secretary Tom Bridges to J.O. Wright, 4 August 1965.

107 PRO, FO371/179984, David Hunt to Neil Pritchard of CRO, 20 November 1965.

Even though the presence of UNFICYP was judged to have made Turkey more malleable over Cyprus, it was also deemed to have allowed Makarios to strengthen the Greek-Cypriot position *vis-à-vis* the Turkish Cypriots. In other words, this was a zero-sum game between two communities that were meant to be cooperating in running the Cypriot state. In December 1965, the Cabinet resignedly "decided that we should do all we can to keep UNFICYP in being".[108] Gradually, therefore, Britain came to accept UN peacekeeping. The reasoning behind this was threefold. Firstly, it was in accordance with the long-standing British notion of international organisations to keep the peace as having a stabilising and conciliatory role rather than one of enforcement. Secondly, it opened up the possibility of a continuing world role for Britain at not too heavy a financial cost, which was flattering to a diminishing world power. Lastly, it was in harmony with the British idea that non-aligned states (and especially those which belonged to the Commonwealth), should involve themselves in building up a zone of peace beyond the interlocking spheres of interest of the two superpowers.[109]

Conclusion

On 10 December 1965, an agreement to begin to dismantle their fortifications was reached by both communities at the port-city of Famagusta. What could have proved to be a landmark in the history of the Cyprus problem in the sense of serving as a potential foothold, from which a solution could be extricated, was soon consigned to the rubbish heap of history. The reasons for this are beyond the scope of this article. What is relevant, however, is the optimism of the December intelligence report: "Rumours of impending trouble over Christmas, which marks the second anniversary of the outbreak of inter-communal fighting, have been fewer than last year and there has been no significant increase in tension on the island. The settlement of Famagusta has been widely welcomed".[110] A more realistic appreciation of the situation was made in the report of the UN Secretary General published on the day of the Famagusta Agreement: "After almost two years, the stalemate remains despite a widespread longing in the island for a return to normality".[111] The irony of the matter was that, in light of subsequent events, such a situation was distinctly more 'normalised' than it would have ever been.

According to Ball, "The British wanted above all to divest themselves of responsibility for Cyprus".[112] This assertion is all too often taken by historians at face value in an attempt to dismiss

108 PRO, FO371/179991, FO to UK Mission to UN, 3 December 1965.

109 Argument found in F.S. Northedge (1974) *Descent from Power: British Foreign Policy 1945-1973*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

110 PRO, CAB191/10, JiG (Cy) Intelligence Report, 14 December 1965.

111 PRO, PREM13/1992, UKMis to UN to FO, 10 December 1965.

112 Wm. Roger Louis (2004) 'Britain and the Middle East after 1945' in L. Carl Brown (ed.), *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 38. That both extremes in the historiography – Hitchens and Reddaway – espouse this statement is indicative.

the actions and initiatives taken by Her Majesty's Government in the history of the Cyprus problem. Such generalisations of the 'above all' type are of little use in historical analysis. In failing to address the 'why?' such generalisations are conclusions whereas they should be arguments.

Ball's conclusion sheds its importance since it is not vindicated by the documentation put forth in this article. The military and political initiatives described in Section I were a precedent for future occurrence. The Joint Truce Force was a predecessor of the extant UNFICYP, while the London Conference was a predecessor to the continuing conferences aiming at a solution to the problem. It was thanks to British decisive action that unfathomable distresses were averted, which in turn allowed the international community to take an interest in Cyprus. Even though Britain was unhappy with anything that it assumed would interfere with its interests on the island and the wider region, the side-effects of the British actions at the end of 1963 and the dawn of 1964 were seminal. Although it is arguable that the 1960 constitution was a device for Britain to keep her influence informally (via the SBA and the Treaty of Guarantee),[113] it does not follow that Britain had the power to live up to the demands of informal influence. The preference for *Enosis* points to a realisation that the 1960 Agreements were not the best for the island and informal influence was secondary to the primacy for the need for stability in the region.

Part of the problem for Britain was that it was never in the comfortable position of having to consider only one community. This was (and still is) a problem of two hyphenated communities which share the 'Cypriot' element just as much, or even less so, than the 'Greek' or 'Turkish' one. Inasmuch, the policy of balance and *enosis* were realistic, whereas the unitary, independent state argument was the most fragile. In short, there were more Greeks and Turks on the island than there were Cypriots. Herein lies a source of the modern tragedy of the island. Differently put, in the words of Douglas-Home, "sense is not enough".[114] The history of the evolution of the Cyprus problem to this day has vindicated the Prime Minister in his remark.

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113 Point made by Alan Sked in his preface to Mallinson's (2005) *Cyprus: A Modern History*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris.

114 PRO, PREM11/4700, Minute by Lord Lambton and Prime Minister's response, 13 May 1964.

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