

# Cyprus: The Search for a Solution

**David Hannay**

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This book describes events related to efforts to solve the Cyprus problem between 1996 and 2004 and is written by one of the protagonists, the retired British diplomat Sir David, later Lord Hannay. Sir David was appointed by the Conservative Government in 1996 as the British Government's Special Representative for Cyprus, and continued representing, and perhaps shaping British policy on Cyprus, during the subsequent Labour governments of Tony Blair.

When one begins reading this book, one is not struck by the modesty of the author, who, on the second page, points out that "most of what has been written about Cyprus ... are at best distorted ... at worst little better than polemic and propaganda ... So for someone who has always been a student of history, it was tempting to try and redress this balance a little." For this reason it is tempting to this reviewer to point to some of the inaccuracies or mistakes contained in his first chapter, an historical background of events in Cyprus between 1960 and 1996. TMT was formed in 1958, and EOKA B in 1971 for example, and not both in 1963, as is asserted in this chapter. President Johnson's warning to Turkey against invading Cyprus took place in 1964 and not 1967. The coup in 1974 was organised and not just "encouraged" by the dictatorial regime in Athens. Under the coupist regime in Cyprus Turkish Cypriots were not attacked before the beginning of the invasion by Turkey. The 1975 Vienna agreement was about limited freedom of movement, not about population exchange. Mrs Titina Loizidou was not awarded damages by the European Court of Human Rights for dispossession of her property by Turkey, but for being denied its use. To be frank though, these errors do not seem to add up to distortion. The account of recent Cypriot history which David Hannay gives in this part of the book, apart from the errors indicated, is fairly objective and free of ethnocentrism. He correctly refers, for example, to the campaign waged by EOKA against British forces in the 1950's as a guerrilla war. However one wonders what current effect a mistaken view of history can have. For example what effect on his current thinking on the Cyprus problem did his mistaken impression that there had been an agreement on population exchange between the communities have?

This account is one of the background chapters. He also provides succinct and fairly objective accounts of the players and the issues involved in the Cyprus

problem. The bulk of the book consists of a readable step by step account of the United Nations efforts to bring about a solution of the Cyprus problem between 1996 and 2003, in which not only the United Nations but also the United Kingdom, usually in the person of David Hannay, and the United States, were key players. In this account, he is objective in detailing the unrelenting negativity of Rauf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, but also the full backing provided for this obstruction of efforts to reach a solution by Ankara.

Not being an historian however, I read the book not so much for the sequential account of events, but for the light it casts on what I regard as four key questions. Firstly, since David Hannay is not only an author, but was primarily involved in the Cyprus problem as a British Government Representative, what does he reveal about what he was actually trying to do, about what his instructions were, and about what British interests in the issue were? Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, this same period was the period during which Cyprus became a candidate, then negotiated and attained accession to the European Union. How does David Hannay interrelate this with the UN process? Thirdly, was there during this time a change in Turkish attitude, and to what does David Hannay attribute it? And, finally, what is revealed about why the final product was acceptable to the majority of Turkish Cypriots and unacceptable to the great majority of Greek Cypriots?

There is relatively little in the book on which to base answers to the first set of questions, but what there is, is interesting. In the preface, David Hannay describes not why the British Government offered him the job, but why he agreed to take it. The political reason that he gives is the following: "The commitment given by the European Union in 1995 to open accession negotiations with Cyprus, divided or not, within six months of the end of the Inter-Governmental conference which was drawing up the Amsterdam Treaty (in 1997) meant that we were sliding towards a parting of the ways which might either consolidate the division of the island or lead to its entering reunited into the European Union. It also had the potential to lead to a serious crisis in the relations between Turkey and the European Union and thus to a threat to the peace and stability of the Eastern Mediterranean. So the case for making a further determined attempt to reach a settlement was a serious one."

He describes his mission as having four components: The first was to channel British interest in Cyprus through the United Nations. Secondly, the Cyprus problem should not result in frustration of the planned enlargement of the European Union which was a major British foreign policy objective. Thirdly, to get a settlement of the Cyprus problem before it joined the European Union. This objective was to be pursued in such a way as not to put at risk British relations with Cyprus, Greece or Turkey.

Throughout the book, the impression is given that the practical way in which the last two objectives were pursued included a pragmatic taking into account of Turkish power and Turkish demands, and also trying to ensure that the Cyprus problem would not become a barrier to Turkey's own accession to the European Union. Sometimes this might be done through public support of what was in fact a disputed position. When in April 2002, the British Minister for Europe came to Cyprus and referred to its "peoples" there was naturally concern on the Greek Cypriot side. David Hannay in the book pretends that he does not know that recognition of "two peoples" (as against one people with two ethnic communities) was a basic Turkish demand. These kinds of public steps, included the issue of "acknowledgement" (a term whose paternity he declines and attributes to Denktash), and the question of "rotating presidency" (which is not mentioned in the book), but which in 1999 or 2000 involved David Hannay floating an idea which up to that point had been a Turkish demand.

For Cyprus, Greece, and many EU governments at a subsequent stage, the process of accession of Cyprus to the European Union, the interest of Turkey to be considered a candidate for accession, and efforts to solve the Cyprus problem were, for a number of more or less obvious reasons, mutually re-enforcing processes. David Hannay's attitude is a little contradictory, but basically, this reviewer perceives a tendency for him to share the view of nationalists in Turkey, Greece and Cyprus that this interrelation was in some sense dangerous. In the quotation from the book above, David Hannay gives as one reason for taking up the job the need to avert the dangers to Turkey's relations with the EU and the threat to peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, which he sees as deriving from the process of Cyprus acceding to the EU. He reverts to these fears at other points in the book, though conceding that one might also hope that "the EU dimension" might act as a catalyst for a comprehensive settlement. Intriguingly David Hannay refers to his bad relations with the Greek Foreign Minister in 1996, Theodoros Pangalos, as being rooted in "some rather sharp disagreements between us over Europe's relationships with Turkey and Cyprus" during 1985-1990 when Hannay was UK Permanent Representative to the EU. Pangalos was an ardent proponent and supporter of Cyprus accession to the EU. Was Hannay an opponent?

Certainly in the book he shows only limited appreciation of the intense and positive effect which the process of accession of Cyprus and the EU's developing relations with Turkey had on transforming the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean from a zero-sum game to one in which all could gain through the impact of the EU's expanding, calming and civilising influence through the mechanism of conditionality. Or to be more accurate, it does show an understanding of the positive effect on the issue of a solution in Cyprus from the candidacy of Turkey to the EU. But he appears to basically see problems and

complications arising from the accession course of Cyprus to the EU, which need to be unravelled, particularly in respect of making sure that the EU *acquis* is modified in the case of Cyprus to accommodate the United Nations' solution plan. As David Hannay sees and reports it, Commission officials, including Commissioner Verheugen, agreed to subordinate the EU *acquis* to the UN solution plan and modify it accordingly, rather than the other way round. It also emerges from David Hannay's account that considerable effort was put in both by the UN Secretariat and the Commission, so that the *acquis* would not be a problem for elements of the Annan Plan which violated its provisions, and so that the *acquis* could not be subsequently used to change elements in the UN solution plan. The references in 2001 and 2002 of the Council of Ministers of the EU and the Seville European Council to the EU accommodating any settlement when Cyprus joined the EU gave a green light, according to Hannay, to the Commission to intensify contacts with the UN negotiating team to define "necessary transitional arrangements or derogations".

At various points in the book David Hannay incidentally records the sharp change in the Turkish Government's attitude on Cyprus. On his first visit to Ankara, in June, 1996 as British Representative on Cyprus, Hannay was asked by the top Turkish official dealing with Cyprus, Inal Batu, "whether there was any chance of trading a unilateral Turkish Cypriot ceding of territory in return for international recognition of the Turkish Cypriot state." Hannay replied that he did not think so. Ecevit reiterated to Hannay the view that the Cyprus problem had been settled by him in 1974, and continued to insist on this when he became Prime Minister of Turkey again in 1999. This was the real and effective Turkish position, as it comes out in the book. Denktash and the Ecevit Government thought that the Cyprus problem had been "solved" in 1974, and therefore throughout the UN negotiations would not even consider plans which took into account almost all their demands. What happened from January 2004 onwards, after the Turkish Cypriot demonstrations and elections, is worth quoting: "The Turkish Government ... resolved its own internal contradictions and concluded that an early settlement on the basis of the Annan plan offered a potentially acceptable outcome and the only sure way of furthering its major policy objective of getting a green light for the opening of its own accession negotiations with the EU at the end of 2004. The Turkish Prime Minister moved rapidly, through a series of high level meetings with the EU, the UN secretary-general and the president of the United States, to indicate that he was anxious for a resumption of the negotiations on the conditions laid down by Annan... " It would have been interesting to know more about these meetings.

As David Hannay's account makes clear, by this time, the Accession Treaty between Cyprus and the EU had been signed in Athens in April 2003, including protocol 10, clarifying that accession was taking place without a solution, and what would happen in case of a solution after accession. A few days later the Turkish

army made movement of people between the area it occupied and the rest of Cyprus possible. The division did not crumble, because unlike the German case the army that maintained the division and the country to which the army belonged did not crumble, but the Denktash myth did. The Denktash myth was that the two communities were dangerous to each other, and on this assumption much of the negotiations since 1974 had been based. David Hannay stepped down from his post at the same time as De Soto closed his office in Nicosia and the Secretary General produced a report for the Security Council blaming Denktash for the failure of the negotiations.

This sequence of events already throws some light on why the Turkish Cypriots voted yes and the Greek Cypriots no in the subsequent referendum in April 2004. Being a Greek Cypriot, the reviewer cannot resist the temptation to pick out some of what went into the making of the Annan plan in the UN negotiations. This is not to criticise either the UN or David Hannay. After all, they as well as the Greek Cypriots had to confront the blank wall of Turkish insistence that no solution was the solution in Cyprus. It is only to record the direct lineage of the UN solution effort to what David Hannay himself refers to as "the dog days", or which this reviewer likes to refer to as the "cruel and peculiar circumstances" in which negotiations for a solution to the Cyprus problem took place after the Turkish invasion in 1974.

The stage was set for the beginning of negotiations in December 1999 and January 2000, by Clerides coming up with a series of compromise positions, which in Cyprus problem jargon refer to the High Level Agreements, already a compromise between the two communities achieved in 1977 and 1979. Denktash for his part started with a further retreat from even his hard-line positions of 1992. "His basic thinking", according to Hannay, "basically amounted to two separate states linked by little more than a permanent diplomatic conference in which each side had a veto". He also wished no Greek Cypriot refugee (or Turkish Cypriot for that matter) to return to his home, demanded, even momentary recognition of sovereignty of the "TRNC", and wanted that part of Cyprus to join the EU only when Turkey did.

In June, 2002, Hannay pointed out to Mehmet Ali Birand how far possible solutions were moving towards meeting basic Turkish interests and concerns. Cyprus would have a new flag and a new national anthem and a new name. "It would in fact be the new partnership, for which the Turks and Turkish Cypriots had been calling."

At the end of 2002, before the Copenhagen European Council at which Turkey and Denktash once more refused everything, Hannay comments that "Denktash and the Turks had no excuse if they did not understand that the structure of a

strengthened and open-ended Treaty of Guarantee, a continued Turkish troop presence on the island and a removal of all the existing Greek Cypriot troops and their weapons was potentially on offer."

The character of what was finally on offer, in other words, as well as Turkish negativity landing Cyprus in the EU without a solution, cannot but be considered major factors in the outcome of the referendum, as well as President Papadopoulos' refusal to accept the Annan V plan.

The end of the book is a little chaotic, since it seems to end twice; once with the nth break-up of negotiations by Mr Denktash in March, 2003, with the support of Ankara (this time Erdogan's not Ecevit's Ankara). And secondly, in a postscript which takes account of the belated Erdogan Government drive for a solution after January 2004. Part of the first ending is a chapter entitled "What Went Wrong and Will it Ever Go Right". This chapter seems to have very little to do with the preceding chapters, so much so that it creates confusion in the reader's mind about whether it was written referring to events up to March 2003, or to events up to May 2005. In this chapter it seems that David Hannay pours out all the ethnocentric arrogance which he seems to keep in reign in most of the rest of the book.

For example, though his book clearly shows that the frustration of all efforts between 1996 and 2003, where he concludes his account, were due to Denktash's misbehaviour with the backing of Ankara, in this conclusion-drawing chapter he also comes up with two other reasons for failure: The "blame game", a specialty of the Greek Cypriots, and also the "zero sum game". In this chapter, Hannay even comes up with an inferiority complex of the Greek Cypriots "because Turkey dominated their island militarily". And as proof of this he recites Clerides' statement that bad weather always comes from the Taurus mountains (in Turkey). Referring to the occupied territories (occupied by Turkey) is for David Hannay "a weird politically correct vocabulary", while another indication of this weirdness is referring to the people of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as the Turkish Cypriot Community. I wonder whether David Hannay really ignores the fact that the struggle over defining the meaning of a situation is a real struggle, and that defining the occupation away is a means of legitimising it. Or the fact that military inferiority is real and not a complex. Or that peoples have a right to self-determination which communities do not. Or even that foreign troops in another country's territory against its will is what defines occupation. But I do agree with one of his conclusions in this chapter. "There cannot be a complete resolution of all the disputes between Greece and Turkey without a settlement of the Cyprus problem."

**Michalis Attalides**