

## **The Work of the UN in Cyprus, Promoting Peace and Development.**

Oliver P Richmond and James Ker-Lindsay, eds.  
Palgrave, (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2001) Xxiii + 253 pp.

This is an excellent summary of the various accomplishments and failures of the UN in Cyprus from the first requests for UN assistance in the early 1950s to the present. Its main purpose is to examine and assess the role of the UN in peacekeeping and peacemaking on the island of Cyprus, and it does a superb job of achieving this goal. For the most part the authors are objective and factual; the material is well documented with copious footnotes, many citing primary sources and official documents. The majority of the contributors are British, but other nationalities are represented. Unfortunately, none are Turkish Cypriots.

One of the overall conclusions of these essays is that the UN has largely succeeded in keeping the peace - violent conflict between the two communities has been minimal over the past quarter of a century - but it has not had much luck in forging a lasting peace between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Most of the contributors are hesitant to assign blame to one side or the other for the enduring stalemate, but it is clear that they are more likely to see the Turkish Cypriots and their patrons, the Turks, as the more intransigent parties. Moreover, they are unanimous in their praise for the UN mission, rejecting the claim by some that their presence has had an aggravating rather than ameliorating effect on intercommunal hostilities. The contributors are further in agreement that virtually all aspects of the Cyprus situation have been politicised, even the humanitarian ones that might otherwise be expected to transcend politics. This has had a severely debilitating effect on efforts aimed at reconciliation and integration.

The book is divided into three parts: the first deals with the historical background of the UN in Cyprus, the second with peace and security matters and the third with development and humanitarian issues. Each of the eight chapters addresses a different aspect of one of these themes. Hubert Faustmann's and James Ker-Lindsay's chapters on the history provide both valuable background information as well as context for understanding the role and achievements of the UN. They trace its involvement from the earliest appeals of Makarios and the Greek government to the present, chronicling each major development and many minor ones in considerable detail. In Part II, the three contributions assess the successes and failures of the UN in Cyprus. The title of Edward Newman's essay sums it up well: "The Most Impossible Job in the World: the Secretary-General and Cyprus." Newman, along with

Dan Lindley and Oliver Richmond conclude that a variety of factors have contributed to the failure of the UN to forge a durable peace on the island. These include the politicisation of virtually every aspect of the situation, intransigence on both sides as well as by Greece and Turkey, and the lack of will and commitment on the part of the Great Powers who have been easily distracted from the conditions and fate of the island. In Part 11, Peter Hocknell, Paul Saint Cassia and Madeleine Demetriou examine the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the missing persons issue, and the work of the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) respectively. Hocknell points out that in the early 1970s Cyprus "represented the most concentrated field of UNDP aid in the world." This agency promoted cooperation between the two communities and focussed its early efforts on irrigation and sewerage projects, industrial training and development, and economic growth. In the 1990s it shifted its emphasis to regulating development (much of which was uncontrolled by that time), environmental management and improving public sector efficiency. By the end of the 1990s the UN was more interested in helping countries poorer than Cyprus and the UNDP ended its mission on the island. Saint Cassia shows how the entire issue of the missing/unknown persons issue was brutally politicised from the beginning and has been callously manipulated by both sides ever since. He further examines how the Greek and Turkish Cypriots differed in their approaches to their respective "missing" persons, attributing some of the differences to cultural factors. Finally, in an interesting twist, Madeleine Demetriou argues that the politicisation of the High Commission for Refugees' work was actually beneficial since the agency required bicomunal cooperation in virtually all of its ventures; thus, in effect, bribing the two sides to work together. Although this did not result in a high degree of integration, it brought the two communities together for joint action and yielded important results in the areas of sanitation, the environment, forestry, and the rehabilitation of handicapped people. Most notable of UNHCR's successes are the Nicosia Sewerage Project and the implementation of various other parts of the Nicosia Master Plan.

The audience for such a specialised work is bound to be limited, but there is a great deal to be learned from these essays that has validity beyond the shores of Cyprus and some of the material here can help shed light on UN missions elsewhere. There is little negative that can be said about this useful volume: a few typographical errors surface here and there and Madeleine Demetriou inexplicably describes Larnaca as "a small fishing village" in 1974 when it was, in fact, the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> largest city on the island, but these are small quibbles. Although there are few, if any, revelations here and little that is new, never before has this information been compiled and presented in one place and for that we can be extremely grateful.

**Peter S Allen**