

Keeping the Peace in the Cyprus Crisis of 1963-64

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This is a well researched volume with a well thought out and comprehensive analysis of the 1963-64 crisis on Cyprus. It is a welcome and valuable addition to the extensive literature on the Cyprus problem. It focuses on events and developments that took place at the early formative stages of the ethnic conflict on the island that followed the declaration of independence in 1960. As the author points out, "the crisis of 1963-64 changed the political character of Cyprus in a truly fundamental way." (p.170).

The book consists of thirteen chapters, each of them exploring a certain event phase or aspect of the crisis. Although the focus of the book is on the 1963-64 crisis, in the first three chapters, which serve as a prelude, the author provide background information and analysis of the developments that led to the flare-up in December 1963. The first brief introductory chapter provides an overview of the period of British rule and explains why "the interlocking impact of two utterly basic geographic factors: size and location" have determined much of the political history of Cyprus (p. 3). As James aptly points out, the British interests and presence in Cyprus were a reflection of the island's geography.

The second chapter provides an extensive account of the circumstances under which the British colonial rule of Cyprus ended. Following four years of political trouble, military confrontation and diplomatic activity, a settlement was reached. The Zurich and London agreements, which were negotiated between Greece and Turkey under the auspices of Britain, provided for a political structure of communal dualism conducive to ethnic separation and antagonism. Britain also sought and secured, through the 1960 settlement, recognition of her military presence following the declaration of Cypriot independence. The British goals were met with the establishment of the British Sovereign Base Areas and the right of intervention granted to the guarantor powers (Britain, Greece, and Turkey). As James put it, Britain wanted and received "a specific acknowledgement from Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus of her special position on, and of her rights in, Cyprus." (p. 17).

In the third chapter, the reader will be pleased to find a succinct presentation of the actors, factors and dynamics that led to the collapse of the 1960 settlement. According to James, the heart of the problem had two aspects. One was the

population ratio of 1:4 between the Turkish Cypriot minority and the Greek Cypriot majority. The other important aspect was the strength, proximity and concern of Turkey, which is only fifty miles away from Cyprus. In November 1963, following a three year period of constitutional deadlocks, political polarisation and ethnopolitical tension on the island, Makarios submitted a proposal of thirteen points for the revision of what seemed to be an unworkable constitution. From James's analysis, one might draw the conclusion that President Makarios was looking for a crisis and getting ready for one. The catalyst came a couple of days before Christmas in 1963 when heavy fighting broke out in Nicosia following an intercommunal incident and the death of two Turkish Cypriots.

The second part consists of ten chapters (four to thirteen) which address the many aspects and consequences - domestic and international - of the 1963-64 crisis that brought Greece and Turkey to the brink of war, threatened peace in the region and prompted the United States and the Soviet Union to interfere and seek advancement of their conflicting strategic and ideological goals in the region. The United Nations became involved with the assumption of primary peacekeeping and peacemaking roles. The international organisation also became a channel for the internationalisation of the problem and served as a platform for political debate and diplomatic manoeuvring. In a sense, the UN was used by the various parties as an instrument for collective legitimisation and support.

In the fourth chapter, James explains what the interests of the West in Cyprus were and why Britain, the US and NATO were particularly sensitive with the crisis. The basic argument is that events in Cyprus could lead to a breakdown of order and damage Western assets on the island. Such assets were primarily military and intelligence installations. Cyprus was also associated with the West's wider political interests in the region and the projection of power in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Chapter five focuses on the first attempts to contain the flare-up right after shooting began. The quick reaction of Turkey and "the horrifying prospect of a Turkish invasion" (p. 59) made the escalation of the crisis real and imminent. Everybody realised that the only way to prevent a worsening of the situation was through military intervention by the three guarantor powers. Britain, Greece and Turkey had troops readily available on the island and agreed to establish a Joint Force, which would enforce the ceasefire. James provides a detailed account of the story behind the deployment of the (predominantly British) Joint Force and the demarcation of the Green Line in Nicosia.

Chapters six and seven explain why and how Britain tried to get rid of the "onerous burden" of peacekeeping in Cyprus. The Acheson plan, which provided

for the despatch of a NATO peacekeeping force and a settlement of the Cyprus conflict is presented. It is interesting to note that for the Anglo-Americans, NATO and not the UN was the preferred forum for political debate and action on Cyprus. James in his incisive analysis explains how Cold War dynamics and superpower polemics came into play and shaped positions and policies on Cyprus. Despite Anglo-American objections, and in a setting of military and diplomatic confrontation, the issue was taken to the UN Security Council. The protracted debate at the UN revealed the complexity of the problem, which was involving local, regional and global actors, and conflicting ethnic, political, ideological, and strategic interests. The presentation of the political debate at the Security Council is very enlightening. The American and Soviet rhetoric and arguments added another dimension to the issue. In an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation the two superpowers convincingly showed that they were preoccupied by considerations emanating from their global political, military, economic, and ideological objectives and responsibilities. The American (and British) attitude reflected the containment doctrine that was the driving force behind American foreign policy since the Second World War. The Soviet Union, thinking and acting along similar lines, were trying to counteract American policy and goals, and benefit from the conflict that involved Western allies. Despite the sharp differences the opposing parties had on Cyprus, they all agreed that a speedy despatch of a UN peacekeeping force to Cyprus was necessary to prevent local hostilities from turning into a regional war. The outcome was the adoption of a Security Council resolution establishing UNFICYP (United Nations Force in Cyprus) and calling for the appointment of a UN mediator. The author does a good job in explaining how the Security Council functioned as forum of political debate and manoeuvring and what impact its first resolutions in 1964 had on Cyprus. It cannot go unnoticed that the UN force has been on the island since 1964 and has been in place longer than any other UN peacekeeping force.

Chapters eight to eleven provide a detailed account of the political sensitivities, practical difficulties, complex modalities and many frustrations in recruiting, organising, making operational and efficient a multinational peacekeeping force. UNFICYP was a truly multinational force from the very beginning as it consisted of contingents and military police units from Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand and Sweden. (Later there were contingents from other countries also.) The first Force Commander was Lieutenant-General P. S. Gyani from India. Despite some difficulties deriving from its multinational character and high tension on the island, the Force became fully operational in a short time and managed to play a constructive role in keeping the peace. James takes the position that the Greek Cypriots were giving UNFICYP a hard time. He quotes for example, General K. S. Thimaya, second Commander of the Force, reporting in July 1964 that things "were deteriorating" and that the Greeks were steadily "getting bloodier." (p.145).

Overall, it is obvious to the reader that the author has a negative predisposition against the Greek Cypriots and Greece when addressing the relations of UNFICYP with the local and regional players. This is a pity. A more rounded and balanced presentation of facts would make the book an excellent and more reliable source of information, analysis and judgment.

Chapter twelve, entitled "The Quest for a Better Settlement," is a brief overview with an assessment of the unsuccessful efforts to reach a political settlement in 1964 and 1965. Besides the Acheson Plan, the other main effort was coordinated by the first (and last) UN Mediator Galo Plaza, from Equator, who submitted a comprehensive Report in March 1965. The Report included a proposal for a settlement based on a unitary state and democratic principles. Greece and the Greek Cypriots welcomed the Plaza Report, but Turkey reacted furiously and bitterly. The Turkish Government accused the UN Mediator for going beyond his terms of reference and rejected not only his Report but also the notion of a UN mediator. The author concludes that since the two sides were not willing to make the changes required in running the Cypriot State, "all that was left was the division of the island between the two internal sides." (p. 169). He also quotes the British Prime Minister Alec Douglas-Home who predicted in the 1960s that partition would be the "only possible solution." (p. 169). The author rounds up the British perspective by pointing out that, "[a] decade on, it [partition] became set in what seemed very much like a stone." (p.169). This is reconfirmed in the brief postscript (chapter thirteen) along with the finding that "[t]hroughout the post-1974 years the situation in Cyprus has been very stable." (p.173). In sum, one of the messages of the book is that the prospects of any change on Cyprus are dim and the problem of Cyprus was solved with the division of the island brought about in 1974.

This is an interesting and in many ways fascinating book. It sheds light on one of the most critical phases of modern Cypriot history. The treatment of the peace-keeping aspects of the 1963-64 crisis is very systematic and almost exhaustive. The reader will benefit greatly from James's scholarship, which is profound (it has always been so) and based on extensive research, yet presented in a simple style, easy to read and enjoy. I really enjoyed reading the book and learned a lot from it, although I disagree with some of its assessments and interpretations.

Finally, it should be added that the book also includes a chronology of events, a list of leading personalities, several maps, a list of archival sources, hundreds of footnotes, an extended bibliography, and an index. It is recommended for everyone interested in modern Cypriot history and the intrigues and complexities of Cypriot ethnopolitics as well as the politico-military juggling of international peacekeeping.

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