

Cyprus: In Search of Peace; *Minority Rights Group Report 97/3*

(London: Minority Rights Group, 1997), by Keith Kyle 40 pp.

To informed outsiders it has often been seen as strange that a problem as complex as Cyprus should be presented by the parties involved as being essentially very simple. For the Greek Cypriots the question that needs to be addressed is one of Turkish invasion and occupation. On the other hand, for the Turkish Cypriots, the issue in Cyprus is one of a numerical majority bullying a minority. The reality, as history has shown, is that both parties have truth on their side. For this reason it has often proved extremely difficult to provide a neat account of the Cyprus Problem. Hitherto, any attempt to present an unbiased narrative of the Cyprus Problem has usually steered too far from the main controversies to be useful or has somehow fallen in favour of one or other side, in perception if not in reality. In this report Keith Kyle has largely managed to avoid both of these problems. As a result he has written what could arguably be regarded as being the best concise and up-to-date guide to the issues at play in Cyprus. (To ensure balance and accuracy the Minority Rights Group insists that all their publications are reviewed by eight independent experts on the subject at hand before they are sent to press).

That Keith Kyle should have been able to do this is by no means unexpected; he has four decades of experience as a commentator on Cyprus. Yet for all of his historical knowledge, the author does not become bogged down in irrelevant detail, instead choosing to look at the main issues. To this extent there will be those who will criticise the work for being too shallow at points. This would be an injustice. One cannot hope to cover all points at all times in a work as short as this. What has been attempted, and achieved, is a balanced account of the politics of Cyprus in all their facets. For example in the work there are chapters each of two-three pages, on the constitution, the start of violence in 1963, the events of 1967, and the 1974 crisis, the consequences of 1974, as well as several sections on the events in the years since. Within these sections there are a number of very good summaries of other aspects of the politics of the island such as politics in the north and in the south, the Defence Dogma, and membership of the EU. It was particularly gratifying to find that a chapter addressing the minority communities of the island was included. This is an issue that is too often overlooked when Cyprus is discussed. It is easy to forget that Cyprus is not inhabited simply by the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. To this extent the author briefly examines the status of the Maronites, Armenians and Latins. In addition, Greek Cypriots living in the north and Turkish Cypriots living in the south are also mentioned as being minorities and their relative positions as such are given.

Significantly, the work ends with a series of eight proposals to promote a resolution to the Cyprus Problem. These are interesting and cover a wide range of questions such as the use of bicomunal contact, cross-voting in presidential and

vice-presidential elections, the role of the EU in promoting safeguards for the Turkish/Muslim character of the north, and the position of the 'minority communities'.

The one aspect of this work that was slightly troubling was that the question of Cyprus as a facet of overall Greek-Turkish relations was played down. Much as one may like to think of Cyprus as being a problem between the two communities, it is not. The Cyprus Problem intimately involves both Greece and Turkey and it is clear that any settlement that has any hope of long-term success will require the consent of both countries, in particular Turkey. This should really have been addressed in greater detail. However, as an introductory guide to the politics of the island one would be hard pressed to find a better account than this one.

James Ker Lindsay