

Review Essays

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THE PROBLEM OF CYPRUS IN RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY: TWO PERSPECTIVES

Parker T. Hart, *Two NATO Allies at the Threshold of War: Cyprus, A First-hand Account of Crisis Management, 1965-1968*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1990, xxix+222 pp.

Suha Bolukbasi, *The Superpowers and the Third World: Turkish-American Relations and Cyprus*, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1988, xii+276 pp.

A student of Cyprus, writing late in the last century, observed that "in the space of three thousand years, Cyprus had many invaders and many conquerors, until the whole island was overspread with ashes of many civilizations. To dig into its soil is to uncover the remains of a hundred generations. The later history of Cyprus has been one of transient splendors, clouded by frequent disasters, and ending in utter ruin". This historically accurate assessment of the situation in Cyprus is, alas, also quite descriptive of episodes which have taken place earlier in this century and of conditions prevailing on the island today. The problems of this historically rich, geopolitically important and scenically beautiful island are the focus of these two books analyzing events since the establishing of an independent Cypriot state (1960), as well as episodes resulting from the Turkish invasion of the northern sector of the island in the summer of 1974.

To understand the two books reviewed and the island's present situation, a glance into the past is essential. It will help to explain why Cyprus has been the source of tension for centuries and particularly in the period following its independence. Indeed, few countries the size of Cyprus have had a more eventful history. The key to understanding this island's people lies in their sensitivity concerning foreign domination. Cyprus has long been the victim

of great power rivalry because of its strategic geographic position between the worlds of Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

The third largest island in the Mediterranean, Cyprus has an area of only 3,572 square miles lying about 80 miles west of the coast of Syria, less than 50 miles south of Turkey, and about 250 miles east of the island of Rhodes. Its population is currently estimated to be about 700,000 of whom about 80 percent are of predominantly Greek origin, using Greek as their mother tongue and largely adhering to the Greek Orthodox faith. The Turkish Cypriot population, speaking Turkish as its mother tongue and overwhelmingly Muslim, makes up most of the remaining 20 percent of the population. Its greater length, from northeast to southwest, is approximately 140 miles and its greatest width, north to south, is about 60 miles. As for history, there are three dates before independence worth remembering: the fourteenth century B.C. when the settlement of the island by Greeks began, 1571 when the Ottomans captured it from the Venetians, and 1878, when under the terms of the Cyprus Convention, the British occupation began (it is a curious coincidence that the Venetians and the British each ruled Cyprus for a period of eighty-two years). In 1915 the British Government offered Cyprus to Greece in return for Greek support in World War I. British sovereignty in Cyprus was formally recognized by Turkey in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 and, thereafter, Cyprus was governed as a British colony. In 1959 the Zurich and London Agreements called for the establishment of Cyprus as an independent republic. On 16 August 1960 the Republic of Cyprus formally came into existence.

A rather complicated constitution was imposed to "ensure fair treatment for the two communities". The president of the Republic had to be a Greek Cypriot elected by the Greek Cypriots and the vice-president was granted the right of a final veto on fundamental laws passed by the House of Representatives and on decisions of the Council of Ministers which was composed of ten ministers, three of whom had to be Turks and nominated for appointment by the vice-president. In the House of Representatives thirty-five members were Greeks and fifteen Turks. The United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey became the "guarantor powers" of the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus. Shortly afterwards Cyprus became a member of the United Nations.

Three years after independence the island experienced a period of tensions and clashes between the two ethnic communities, the Greeks and the Turks; acts of violence and trial planted the seeds of suspicion, mistrust and fear among the two communities. Those disputes caused the Turks to withdraw from the central government. The island was shaken by political violence and

deep communal division. Armed clashes between the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus resulted in the Security Council of the United Nations' unanimous decision [Resolution 186], in 1964, to send a peacekeeping force [UNFICYP = United Nations Force in Cyprus] to the island.

The mid-1960s saw improved economic and political relations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. But, alas, violence again broke out in 1967. Tension between the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus affected relations between Athens and Ankara. Actually those tensions in 1967 almost caused a war between Greece and Turkey, both members of the Atlantic Alliance [NATO]. The Greek Cypriots argued in favor of a unitary state and opposed any geographic federation, while the Turkish Cypriots favored a federation along with a forcible population transfer to create a Turkish Cypriot state in the northern part of the island.

Two NATO Allies at the Threshold of War: Cyprus, A Firsthand Account of Crisis Management, 1965-1968 by Ambassador Parker T. Hart is a full and well-documented account of the tension between Greece and Turkey in 1967. It is prefaced by a brief note on the earlier troubles of June 1964 which culminated in the famous letter of President Lyndon Johnson to Turkish Prime Minister Ismet Inonu on 5 June 1964, warning Turkey against the use of force. Ambassador Hart argues that the effect of the Johnson letter was to make the Turkish government more intransigent in 1967 because it was determined never again to accept being treated in such a violent and humiliating way.

The principal merit of the book lies in the detailed narration of the Aghios Amvrosios affair, the strong Turkish reaction and the "shuttle diplomacy" of former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance which finally resolved the crisis on terms which involved great loss of face, and of military advantage, to Greece. Mr. Hart was U.S. Ambassador in Ankara from 1965 to 1968. He naturally gives major emphasis to the Turkish case, with which he is generally in sympathy, but he presents the Greek side of the argument reasonably fairly. He is much in favor of "the Colonels" or, at least, he thinks the crisis would have been quite unmanageable if there had not been a dictatorship in power in Athens which could control all open expressions of public opinion. He is against Archbishop Makarios whom he regards as an enemy of the United States, and dangerous because he sedulously cultivated the friendship of communist and non-aligned countries. Among Cypriots he favors Mr. Glafcos Clerides and distrusts and dislikes almost all others. He does not make much reference to the British but what there is is friendly and measured.

Taken as a whole I find his judgments sensible, though sometimes over-

dramatically expressed. His facts are accurate where I can check them and the documents reprinted in the appendices are valuable. *Two NATO Allies at the Threshold of War* is a good book.

From April 1967 to July 1974 Greece was ruled by a junta, a regime with an established record of antipathy toward Archbishop Makarios, against whom it engineered a *coup d'état* on 15 July 1974. Despite diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, the Athens-engineered coup was swiftly followed by Turkey's invasion of Cyprus. On 20 July 1974 Turkish forces landed in Kyrenia and consolidated their hold of the northern sector of Cyprus, occupying 36 percent of the island's territory and forcing 200,000 Greek Cypriots to flee to the southern sector of the island. Britain, a "quarantor" power, defaulted on its obligation to both communities (Greek and Turkish) in Cyprus—a special case because Britain had guaranteed by treaty not only the international sovereignty of the island but also its domestic constitutional order. (The Turks violated the former on the pretext of countering Greek violations of the latter. Britain did not attempt to reverse either, but contented itself with supplying peacekeeping forces to consolidate successive *faits accomplis*.) The tragic developments in Cyprus in July 1974 brought the collapse of the military dictatorship in Athens and the restoration of democracy in Greece.

In the United States the Turkish invasion of Cyprus—in violation of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Foreign Military Sales Act explicitly forbidding the use of American arms by one U.S. ally against another—inspired Congress to impose an arms embargo on Turkey, and to require the American president to report to Congress every sixty days on the status of the Cyprus problem. The arms embargo was lifted in 1978. At the United Nations several General Assembly resolutions ordered Turkey to remove its troops from Cyprus.

Since 1974 negotiations have taken place both bilaterally between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots and through the United Nations and U.N. Secretary General to help find a just and lasting solution to the island's chronic problems. There has been little success. Negotiations are complicated by the presence in the north of thirty-thousand Turkish troops and approximately sixty-thousand settlers from mainland Turkey, the kind of international guarantee to be established, the resettlement of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot refugees, the power-sharing arrangement, and the assurance of the "three basic freedoms", namely the freedom to move, work and live anywhere in Cyprus.

In August 1977 Archbishop Makarios died. Mr. Spyros Kyprianou became the president of the republic till 1988. Kyprianou lost the elections of

1988 and was replaced by Mr. George Vassiliou. In the Turkish-held north, Mr. Rauf Denktash, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, on 15 November 1983 proclaimed the unilateral independence of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC), which only Turkey recognizes.

Suha Bolukbasi's *Turkish-American Relations and Cyprus* is a study of the problem of Cyprus and its impact on Turkish-American relations and indeed on the Atlantic Alliance. While the principal intent of the book is to present the Turkish perspective on the problem of Cyprus, its ultimate value lies in the author's use of Turkish sources. The book is divided into four chapters: "Cyprus until 1960", "1964 Cyprus Crisis", "1967 Cyprus Crisis", and "1974 Cyprus Crisis". The fourth chapter is the most interesting, despite a few errors. The late Benjamin Rosenthal (D., N.Y.), was a member of the House of Representatives and not a Senator (p. 213). The size of the Greek-American community is rather small and its strength limited in the state of Indiana (p. 215).

Cyprus today consists of two separate communities, one almost exclusively Greek, the other almost exclusively Turkish, almost totally separated both by their own armed forces and by a substantial United Nations peace-keeping force, with entirely separate administrations, political structures and economies, and with virtually no direct communication either at an individual or official level. There are, nonetheless, some rather surprising examples of continuing practical co-operation, particularly in respect to public utilities, which permit a small degree of optimism in an otherwise depressingly deadlocked situation.

For years now the problem of Cyprus has been commanding the attention of the world community. Numerous studies have been produced arguing its causes and analyzing its national and regional implications. Cyprus remains the core issue in relations between Greece and Turkey. Although Cyprus is not yet a member of the Atlantic Alliance, its unresolved status is a running sore in NATO's south-eastern region. With Greece a member of the European Economic Community, the problem of Cyprus is of concern to the European Community as well. The international community must fully support the efforts of Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, the U.N. Secretary General to bring about a just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus problem. But the most important role in solving the problem must be, and should be, played by the people of Cyprus, Greeks and Turks. The Greeks should no longer look to Athens and think of themselves as part of Greece. The Turks should not look to Ankara and think of themselves as part of Turkey. Greeks and Turks of Cyprus must turn towards each other and think of themselves as *Cypriots*. The leaders

of the two communities, with the assistance of the U.N. Secretary General must bridge their differences and find lasting solutions to the constitutional and structural problems which for long have divided their island and its inhabitants. They should work toward a bizonal, bicomunal solution to the Cyprus problem.

The studies of Ambassador Hart and Dr. Bolukbasi deserve close reading by anyone interested in the problem of Cyprus and wishing to understand its impact on Greek-Turkish relations and American foreign policy in the region.

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