

NEWS RELEASE

Issued by THE GREEK CYPRIOT POLITICAL MOVEMENT FOR LABOUR

3, Causton Road, N.6.

The Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, M.P. Leader of the Labour Party, speaking at the May Day Rally in Hyde Park on Sunday May 3rd, made some references to Cyprus. These gave rise to criticism both in Cyprus and Greece and also among Cypriot members of the Labour Party here and the above Movement thought it advisable to refer the matter to Mr. Harold Wilson.

The following is his reply which the Greek Cypriot Political Movement for Labour is glad to publish. Its own letter is appended at the end.

Dear Mr. Joannides,

Thank you for your letter of May 12th and for your congratulations on the local elections successes.

I am sorry that the remarks which I made on the Cyprus situation on Sunday May 3rd have led to a misunderstanding and in some instances, to misrepresentations.

You are quite right in saying that the motives for my speech were a sincere wish to see peace in Cyprus, the demolition of road blocks and gun emplacements, the restoration of unrestricted freedom of movement not only for the local population but for the United Nations troops and the demilitarisation of irregular forces.

Whatever the interpretations you put on the term genocide, it is unhappily true that in recent months, there have been acts of murder committed either by the Turkish Cypriots on their Greek fellow countrymen or by the Greek Cypriots on members of the Turkish community. It is unquestionable that it was to meet the danger both of civil war and of external intervention that the United Nations force was sent by agreement with the government headed by Archbishop Makarios to try to bring about law and order.

In my speech, I was careful neither to direct my attacks to the Greek community or to the Turkish community. In fact, acts of murder and terrorism have been committed by both sides and it was not my wish to allocate blame but to insist that the United Nations be given the necessary authority to step in and stop this bloodshed.

Our anxiety is only that there should be peace in Cyprus and that there should be self-determination for the people. It is essential that the United Nations be enabled to carry out its mission particularly until the time when the mediator is able to present his report and we can return to a serious consideration of a political solution of the present problems.

In case you should think that in this answer to your letter, I have in any way deviated from the speech which I gave on Monday May 3rd, I am enclosing a copy of it for the information of you and your colleagues.

Let me say in conclusion, how much we value and appreciate your co-operation in this country with the Labour Party.

Yours sincerely,

(signed) Harold Wilson.

(continued....)

12th May 1964.

The Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, M.P.,  
House of Commons, S.W.1.

Sir,

The Committee of the Greek Cypriot Political Movement for Labour, at their yesterday's meeting, examined the following which they have authorised me to communicate to you :

- A. The recent County and Local Elections and our own contribution to election work. We congratulate the Labour Party on its victory and as an organisation we will do our utmost during the forthcoming parliamentary elections.
- B. Your remarks on Cyprus. We have read the speech delivered by you in Hyde Park on the occasion of the May Day Rally, as reported in the "Guardian" and in other papers. We have studied very carefully your references to Cyprus. We found that basically they spring from misinformation or from a mis-reading of the actual situation. Certain of your remarks and in particular the reference to "genocide" have been deeply wounding to the Greek Cypriots, if not in fact downright offensive - incidentally they have been so considered and interpreted in Cyprus.

We understand the motives behind your words. We believe that they were inspired by a sincere wish to see peace in Cyprus, the demolition of strong-points, firing-points and road blocks, the restoration of unrestricted freedom of movement, also respect for life, as a pre-condition to political settlement. Unfortunately, some of your words and more explicitly the word "genocide", within the context they were used, created the impression that you were, more or less, accusing the Greeks of this foul aim, or in any case considering them responsible for all the tragic developments in Cyprus. In fact, the opposite has been the case. The Turkish minority defied both the Government and the Constitution not only in resorting to arms but in applying methodically what amounts to a calculated policy of armed secession. Even persons straying in the Turkish quarters are shot at. This truth alone, if sufficiently understood, will, we believe, help towards a better realisation of the nature of the present-day Cypriot problem and commend the correct way of facing, and eventually, resolving it.

If we have read into your remarks more than was intended or if you have been misreported, we apologise. We shall be glad however, to have your observations, or those of the Labour Party, on the subject as we feel that they will help enormously in clearing the atmosphere.

We propose to publish this letter with any comments which you yourself or the Labour Party would care to make.

Assuring you of our continuing support on behalf of the Greek Cypriot Political Movement for Labour,

Yours faithfully,  
(signed) Evdoros Joannides,  
Chairman.