

Lord Caradon on the prospects of a terrible winter in the eastern Mediterranean

UN should act to stop drift to disaster in Cyprus

Earlier this month a few of us who love Cyprus and her people came together to form the Friends of Cyprus. We at once received support from members of all political parties in this country, and we were anxious from the start to make it clear that our aim was wholly impartial; it was to help, if we could, to bring succour and peace to all the people of Cyprus.

We sent Brigadier Michael Harbottle, who was at one time Chief of Staff of the United Nations Force in Cyprus, to the island to bring us the most up to date information on the present situation with special reference to the urgent and desperate need for relief. He will be back to report to us soon.

At the same time, I was asked to go at once to New York and Geneva to report on United Nations endeavours to stop further bloodshed, bring relief and search for a peaceful settlement.

In addition to discussions with those concerned at United Nations headquarters in New York and in the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Geneva, I was able during the week to have talks in the United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations in New York, and in the United States State Department and with members of the Congress in Washington.

I came back to report to Friends of Cyprus with several strong impressions in my mind.

First, the extent of the tragedy. The accounts of ruthless and senseless violence are

fresh in our minds. But what is not adequately realized is the extent of the suffering of countless innocent people both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. There are far more Turkish Cypriots south of the line than north of the line, and far more Greek Cypriots north of the line than Turkish Cypriots. It is a disaster for all the people of the island and with every week that passes things get worse with winter approaching; something like a third of the whole population has been uprooted from homes and livelihood. Industries stop, crops are lost, animals die or neglected, the means of survival rapidly diminish.

My second impression is that I see no early escape from the disastrous drift. True Glavkos Clerides for the Greek Cypriots and Raouf Denktash for the Turkish Cypriots, old and wise friends, have shown compassion and courage in the agreements on exchange of prisoners, but no one I have consulted expects the Turkish Government to agree to an early withdrawal from the line of division, except perhaps for a token withdrawal in Famagusta. It would obviously be difficult or even impossible for the Turkish Prime Minister, having stirred the enthusiasm of his people by the decision to invade, to withdraw unilaterally before the Turkish elections. Equally impossible for the Greek Government, also facing elections, to accept in effect a partition of the island. So no early advance to a settlement seems possible. Indeed the danger is that deadlock will lead to new conflict.

It follows that the suffering of a quarter of a million refugees will become much worse in the winter and the New Year.

What then can be done to escape from the danger of fresh conflict and the prospect of escalating economic ruin and widespread and prolonged and growing human feeling.

The Secretary General of the United Nations has not underestimated the challenge. Though comparatively small in

the scale and numbers, this is the greatest test for the United Nations. The situation he said "calls in question the very essence of the United Nations Charter, weighing upon the credibility of the organization and its future effectiveness". He says that the hopes of the world are centred on the Security Council and that he trusts that "we shall not fail in our duty".

Nothing less than a unanimous resolution of the council

will provide the basis for a settlement. The elements of agreement are already there in the hurried resolutions passed by the council while the confusion of the conflict continued. What is surely needed now is a new initiative setting out a comprehensive plan first for dealing with the constitutional necessity to give the Turkish Cypriots communal security and local autonomy. We know that proposals to those ends were well advanced before the coup. Now the assurances and the guarantees must be strengthened. There must also be urgent provision for dealing with the humanitarian need to let people go safely back to their homes. There must be a new mandate for the United Nations Force. There must be new guarantees ensuring the future independence and sovereignty of the island. There must also be confirmation of the unanimous calls already made for a phased withdrawal of all Greek and Turkish troops from the republic.

Such an initiative should come not from the United Nations General Assembly but from the Security Council where unanimity can add strength to the resolution.

On behalf of the Friends of Cyprus I have urged that the British Government should take the initiative. We in this country have had a long association with Cyprus; we still have bases in the island; we have obligations under the 1960 agreements. We have a unique opportunity to put forward a full plan for future action, a plan which it would be difficult for other powers—

including the super powers—to propose but which all could accept.

The dreadful damage which has been done and the even greater dangers which threaten cry out for such a new initiative.

I have had a long association with Cyprus. I first acted as Governor during the Second World War. At that time, relations between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were easy and friendly. There were officials, judges, members of the Executive Council from both communities, and both served in the same military units. Much later, I returned in bad times but when I left in 1960 as the last Governor of Cyprus I paid my respects to both Archbishop Makarios and Dr Kutchuk (the leader of the Turkish Cypriots at that time). We had worked together with trust and confidence for more than a year to establish in harmony an independent sovereign Cyprus.

I am convinced that cooperation and conciliation are possible. There is no need for the beautiful island to be torn apart in hate and bloodshed. The drift to disaster must be stopped. There must be an alternative to violent confrontation.

Glavkos Clerides and Raouf Denktash are setting an example. We are all deeply thankful for their lead. Now we must surely do all we can to see that they are not hindered but encouraged and assisted.

Hugh



Field bakery at the refugee camp at Dhékelia.