

The Cyprus Question

Turk and Greek are once again threatening war over Cyprus. No patchwork peace settlement will last. In the United States, both the left and the right are confused; since there is manifestly no Communist issue involved, and since Communism dominates everyone's thinking, neither rightists nor leftists are able to come to grips with the complex of rights and wrongs involved.

The problem begins, as do so many other problems in the world, with British imperialism. Britain occupied and ruled Cyprus until 1960, and the ethnic problem on the island festered until that date. While the Greeks outnumber the Turks by four to one on the island as a whole, there is a clear and evident solution to the conflict in personalities, ethnic ties, language, and culture that sunders the two ethnic groups. That solution is partition, because Cyprus is dotted with a number of self-contained Greek and Turkish towns and communities, with virtually no integration within each town; in the capital city of Nicosia, the northern quarter is exclusively Turk and the rest of the town is Greek.

When Britain was preparing to grant the island independence, the Turks, instead of urging partition, alienated the Greek patriots by pressing Britain to maintain its rule rather than leave the Turkish minority to Greek mercies. But the independence agreement, while failing to grant partition, did have the merit of granting the Turkish communities autonomy in

their areas, and giving Turks veto power over Cypriote legislation. But the Greek Cypriotes were not content with this fairly equitable arrangement. The Cypriote regime began to infringe on the agreed autonomy; worse, the government, in collaboration with mainland Greece, systematically and grievously violated the agreed limitation on the number of mainland troops on the island. While Britain, the Greeks, and the Turks had agreed to limit mainland armed forces on the island to 950 (with Turkey allowed a lower quota), the Greeks, under the command of the fervent and fascistic General [Giorgios] Grivas, infiltrated from six to twelve thousand troops onto the island. This infiltration raised for the Turks the dread spectre of *enosis* — of union of Cyprus with the Greek mainland, which would completely jeopardize Turkish autonomy.

Through a series of crises, this troop concentration has been built up. Further, since 1962 the Turkish communities, again in violation of their autonomy, have been blockaded by the Greek troops. In the guise of keeping the Turkish minority from acquiring “strategic materials,” the Greek soldiers have prevented them from possessing timber, spare auto parts, cement, telephones, jackets, shoes, and raincoats. Finally, as the last straw, General Grivas recently retaliated against some Turkish snipers by massacring whole Turkish villages. That massacre touched off the current Cypriote crisis.

It is clear from our history of the problem that the Turks have legitimate grievances of long standing, and that the problem won't be set aright until partition insures the absolute protection of the rights of the Turkish people. In this crisis the United States, true to its long-standing policy of defending the status quo whatever it may be, has for years come down squarely on the side of the Greek rulers over the Turkish minorities. Hence, the burning of the American flag by angry students in the Turkish capital of Ankara. America, once again, almost unerringly, comes down on the wrong side — and again, unsurprisingly, its U.N. vote on behalf of freezing the status quo lined it up side by side with the Soviet Union.