



United Kingdom: Parliamentary Action During the 1974 Turkish Invasion of Cyprus

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UNITED KINGDOM

PARLIAMENTARY ACTION DURING THE 1974 TURKISH INVASION OF CYPRUS

In the summer of 1974, a crisis developed on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus resulting in the following interrelated events as later encapsulated by a British parliamentary select committee:

- (a) a coup d'état on 15 July supported by the Greek Government of the Colonels and by Greek army officer in Cyprus which overthrew the Government of President Makarios and installed Nicos Sampson as President;
- (b) an invasion by Turkish military forces on 20 July followed immediately by the collapse of the Sampson regime and his replacement by Glafkos Clerides and by the fall of the junta in Greece and an invitation to Karamanlis to return from exile and restore constitutional government in Athens. A preliminary cease-fire was reached on 22 July, leading to the first Geneva Conference and the signature of the Geneva Declaration on 30 July;
- (c) following the breakdown of further Geneva talks, the Turkish forces resumed military action and expanded the area under Turkish control to between 35 and 40 per cent of the island before a cease-fire was reached on 16 August.¹

On July 17, 1974 in announcing the arrival in Britain of the deposed President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs also stated in the House of Commons that:

The Greek Government bears a heavy responsibility for the situation in the island. Under the Treaty of Guarantee they are firmly committed to respect the independence of the Republic and to assist in the maintenance of stability in the region. It is the duty of the Greek Government to avoid any threat to the independence of Cyprus.²

The Treaty of Guarantee was reached between Greece, Cyprus and the United Kingdom on August 16, 1960.

Following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, a series of debates in the House of Commons ensued, but no reference could be found to any legislation or resolution being submitted with the aim of criticizing Turkey for the invasion of Cyprus. Later, in January 1976, the Select Committee was

¹ REPORT FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CYPRUS at vii (HC 331, 1975-76).

² 877 PARL DEB HC col. 447 (July 17, 1974).

appointed to report by April 15, 1976, on the situation in Cyprus. The Report of the Select Committee provides the following relevant information relating to the British reaction to the Cyprus crisis:

- Following the Sampson coup in Cyprus, consultations took place between Britain and Turkey, while Greece abstained, on any action to be taken. These consultations were abortive but it was clear that Britain was not willing to intervene jointly with Turkey.
- From August 1974 British action over Cyprus was confined to a number of diplomatic moves. After the second phase of the Turkish military operations the British Government acted largely through the United Nations which passed a further series of Resolutions.
- The British Foreign Secretary gave a warning of the possibility of war between Britain and Turkey.

Among the conclusions reached by the Select Committee were:

- Britain had a legal right, a moral obligation and the military capacity to intervene in Cyprus during July and August 1974, but the Government refused to give the reasons why Britain did not intervene.
- Britain must urge that all further progress in Turkey's developing relationship with the European Economic Community should be withheld until an agreed solution of the Cyprus problem is arrived at.³

In response, the British Government noted that it had in fact adequately explained to the Committee the questions of its moral obligation and military capacity. It also rejected the conclusion that further progress in Turkey's developing relationship with the EEC should be withheld until an agreed solution of the Cyprus problem is arrived at and stated that "it does not believe that a solution can be promoted by isolating Turkey."⁴ The intention not to isolate Turkey may perhaps explain the absence of any legislation or other parliamentary measures critical of Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus.

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³ *Supra* note 1, at xxi.

⁴ REPORT FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CYPRUS, OBSERVATIONS BY THE GOVERNMENT, Cmnd. 6579, at 5 (Aug. 1976).