

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CYPRUS

Statement in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, by Dr. R.A. McKay, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, on February 19, 1957.

I am reluctant, as I am sure are all of the friends and allies of the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey, to intervene in the debate on this unfortunate subject. But after hearing the speeches made by the distinguished representatives of those three countries in this Committee, and after long study of the problem, I feel it necessary to make a few points.

The first, which seems to me obvious, is that the problem of Cyprus is highly complex from the point of view of international law, geography, and ethnic, linguistic, religious and strategic considerations. It is not a question to which any one of us could give a quick and facile answer. Cyprus, in ancient, medieval and modern history, has proved a bone of contention. We must be cautious about suggesting solutions which might stir up further strife, even if this Committee really felt it had the competence to do so.

The second point which stands out in our examination of this question is the inescapable conclusion that the Cypriots would have best served their own good by accepting constitutional development in Cyprus along the lines offered by the United Kingdom Government. In particular, it does seem to us that the off-hand dismissal by the Greek Government of the proposals made by that eminent jurist, Lord Radcliffe, without any serious study, was not an act which could conceivably be described as intended to help towards a solution of the question.

I was sorry to hear some of the charges levelled at the United Kingdom Government by the distinguished Foreign Minister of Greece. We in Canada who know so well the history of the development of the British Empire into a Commonwealth

of Nations, find it difficult to believe that any people under British rule would not be able gradually and peacefully to work out their own destinies. We recognize that the Radcliffe constitution and previous offers did not immediately give complete self-government to Cyprus. Indeed in the present circumstances that would be highly unrealistic. But if it did give a very great measure of self-government to the people of Cyprus and if this constitution were the point of departure I think it would direct the peoples of Cyprus, no matter what their origins, towards a better, more peaceful and prosperous existence. And I ask the people of Cyprus to study carefully the history of the development of the Commonwealth of Nations to see if the United Kingdom, having in good faith on both sides started a people on the path to self-government, has ever thwarted it in its subsequent development.

My Government has believed in the past, and continues to do so, that a solution to the problem of Cyprus must be worked out by the parties principally concerned. I do not think airing of the dispute in this body is likely to help. In addition, we do not think that the continuance of the near state of civil war in Cyprus, and its encouragement from abroad, nor the stirring up of animosity and hatred on racial lines in this small island is the way to solve the problem. It is of the greatest importance for the sincere friends of all three of the disputants in this question that it be settled as quickly as possible with the minimum of public contention. Above all any further deterioration in the relations between Greece and Turkey on the one hand and between Greece and the United Kingdom on the other can only add to the unsettled conditions in the Middle East.

As regards the charges and counter-charges about terrorism in Cyprus, it is clearly difficult to decide when such activity is criminal and when it is heroic. But no matter how one labels it, the end result is misery for the people, and under no circumstances can we condone the aid and encouragement given to these activities from the mainland of Greece. This again, surely is a question which can and should be settled amicably by the powers concerned and my Delegation cannot believe that the United Nations can play a useful role in this issue.

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