

ISSN (online): 2547-8702

**EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN POLICY NOTE**

September 2024, No. 102b

**CYPRUS 1974 TO 2024: PERMITTED INVASION AND PLANNED  
SCLEROSIS: THEN IS NOW**

William Mallinson

It is well enough known that Turkey was aided and abetted by Kissinger and his obedient British Foreign Minister, Callaghan, in its plan to take over one third of Cyprus. The plan to partition Cyprus had existed since at least 1963, when Turkey threatened to invade Cyprus following their rejection of Makarios' Thirteen Points, points which Britain had encouraged Makarios to introduce. Around that time, Britain, keen to divest itself of its Treaty of Guarantee responsibilities, was already happy to let Washington make the running. Thus Kissinger did not allow Britain to give up its bases, as the following demonstrates:

*"The US Government are now firmly attached to the view that withdrawal from our bases in Cyprus would have a destabilizing effect upon the Eastern Mediterranean, with implications for the Middle East. We do not believe that it would have any significant effect on Arab/Israel relations; its effect on the relations between Turkey, Greece and the Alliance would depend on the circumstances in which it took place. Dr. Kissinger in particular is anxious that we should 'continue to occupy this square of the world chessboard', we do not any longer seek such a world role. Although our preferred policy is for a complete British military withdrawal from Cyprus, we recognize that we cannot do so at present, given the global importance of working closely with the Americans. [...] Given our decision not to use military force in Cyprus and the relatively small amount of pressure we can bring to bear upon Cyprus, Greece and Turkey, this puts us in the invidious position of having responsibility without power. This has brought us no advantages whatsoever and it must be in British interests for us to work for a solution which will not involve Britain in any guarantee obligations or other lasting commitments over Cyprus. Such a solution is however remote and will be particularly difficult to achieve as long as we retain a physical presence in the Bases".<sup>1</sup>*

---

*William Mallinson is a former British diplomat, and author, inter alia, of a) Cyprus: A Modern History, Cyprus, b) Diplomatic History and the Clash of Theory in International Relations, c) Partition through Foreign Aggression, d) Kissinger and the Invasion of Cyprus: Diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean and e) Guicciardini, Geopolitics and Geohistory: Understanding Inter-State Relations. His book Britain and Greece: The Real Story, is due to be published before the end of the year.*

<sup>1</sup> "British Interests in the Eastern Mediterranean", paper by Western European Department, FCO, 11 April 1975.

In the end, Britain caved in to Kissinger's wish to have Britain keep its bases, with the FCO writing: *He [Kissinger] was also concerned with the effects of United States policy over Cyprus on the resolution of the Arab/Israel problem, and he regarded this as more important than Greek hostility towards the United States, despite the effect of this dissension on the Southern Flank of the Alliance.*<sup>2</sup>

### **Britain Changes Priorities**

By 1980, with Thatcherism in full swing, the FCO had caved in, and put the usefulness of the bases back on the agenda, downgrading the search for a solution to the "Cyprus problem", with the FCO expostulating: *"The benefits that we derive from the SBAs are of major significance and virtually irreplaceable. They are an essential contribution to the Anglo-American relationship. The Department have regularly considered with those concerned which circumstances in Cyprus are most conducive to our retaining unfettered use of our SBA facilities. On balance, the conclusion is that an early 'solution' might not help (since pressures against the SBAs might then build up), just as breakdown and return to strife would not, and that our interests are best served by continuing movement towards a solution – without the early prospect of arrival"*.<sup>3</sup>

Since then, little has changed other than cosmetically, and in PR terms. Although Washington still hopes for double-*enosis*, it will never admit this in public. As long as the "British" bases are secure (and can be used to support Israel in its genocidal actions), Cyprus will not re-unite, as the rejection of the NATO- and Tukey-biased Annan Plan shows.

Despite various UN-sponsored talks, the partition is stronger than ever. As for double-*enosis*, it is doubtful that Turkey would wish to have a border with Greece so near to its southern coast. Nor, for that matter, would Moscow allow such a scenario, as it would strengthen NATO's reach. Soviet (now Russian) policy, then as now, was to prevent what it saw as unwarranted NATO influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Hence its emphasis on a Cyprus free of foreign military forces. *Enosis* was certainly not a priority, since that would have entailed the spread of NATO, *de jure*, to the island. The Kremlin had certainly heeded Henry Kissinger's words in 1957: "But for the foreseeable future we should be able to count on Okinawa or perhaps the Philippines as a staging area for the Far East, on Cyprus or Libya as staging areas for the Middle East, and on Great Britain as a staging area for Europe".<sup>4</sup> Moscow is fully aware of NATO's keenness to spread its influence wherever it can, and is unlikely to countenance the possibility of official NATO forces near to Syria. As long as the two NATO members, Greece and Turkey threaten each other, Moscow is happy, while the US therefore pushes for a settlement for Cyprus that will prevent a state with an independent foreign policy, since it could otherwise one day move closer to Moscow.

---

<sup>2</sup> "British Policy on Cyprus: July to September 1974", FCO 9/2379, file WSC 020/548/1. 46/1248, file DPI/516/1.

<sup>3</sup> Fergusson to Private Secretary, 8 December 1980, FCO 9/ 2949, file WSC 023/1, part C., *minute*.

<sup>4</sup> Kissinger, Henry, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, published for the Council on Foreign Relations by Harper Brothers, New York, 1957, p. 165.

## **To Conclude**

Thus, unless Washington and Moscow agree on an independent and neutral island, it will continue to be a case of waiting for Godot. Another scenario would be Moscow, Ankara and Athens setting up a plan for an independent and neutral Cyprus. Yet another would be Moscow's victory over Kiev (and therefore over Washington and London), which would almost by default weaken the Anglo-Saxon hold on the Bases. A most intriguing scenario would be Moscow recognising occupied Cyprus; that would really put the cat among the pigeons. At any rate, because of Cyprus' status as a mere strategic strongpoint, then as now, its people's fate will depend on external armchair Cold War warriors.

As Guicciardini wrote: "Things have always been the same; the past sheds light on the future, while the same things return with different colours".