

Abdi İpekçi (Editor, Milliyet
(Istanbul))

THE SITUATION IN THE BALKAN COUNTRIES AFTER THE CYPRUS CRISIS

It is a fact that the Cyprus crisis is by no means over and it is also a fact that this crisis as well as the island of Cyprus, itself, concerns vitally the Balkan countries.

This concern, this vital concern, is due mainly to two factors:

First; the international status of Cyprus, which occupies a very important strategic position, especially within the context of actual sensitive international balance.

Second; more specifically, the growing possibility that two Balkan countries which are parties to the Cyprus dispute, may be dragged into an unfortunate armed conflict against one another.

Turkish ~~peace~~^{military} operation in Cyprus has prevented ENOSIS, the annexation of the Island to Greece and although relations have been extremely strained, a Turkish-Greek armed conflict has not taken place.

One major result of the Turkish intervention has been the toppling over of the Junta Regime in Greece and its replacement by a democratic government. ~~It was~~^{Turks} hoped that a more realistic approach by the new democratic government in Greece, to the problem of Cyprus will facilitate a just and permanent solution of this problem. This, in turn, would bring about an amelioration of the relations between the two countries and enhance, in general, the cooperation and goodwill in the Balkans.

It is very unfortunate that this hope has not been realized until today and it will be an illusion to think that its realization will be easy.

The main stumbling block to a permanent and just solution, from the Turkish point of view is this: Greeks have, up to now, chosen to "internationalize" the problem, rather than seeking a solution through direct negotiations with the Turks.

At the beginning Greece has ^{hoped} demanded an intervention by the NATO. When this intervention was not forthcoming, she has decided to withdraw from the military organization of NATO.

Greeks have then, attempted to "drag" the problem to an international level and have tried very hard to bring about a United Nations resolution in this direction.

It is indeed difficult to think that such attempts are either realistic or useful.

First, to drag the Cyprus issue - and the Island itself - into the NATO orbit, was a provocative attempt. It was quite natural that Balkan countries, the Soviet Union and Arab countries would react strongly to such an attempt. These countries would quite understandably like to have Cyprus remain independent and free from NATO influence as well as NATO bases.

As for the internationalization of the problem; it is only too obvious that to internationalize the question, to make it an international issue would introduce various conflicting interests into the question. This would make the problem, more complicated and insoluble.

Unfortunately, Greeks ^{seem to} have resorted to another dangerous and futile tactic.

~~Everybody, including the Greeks, must have realized by this time, that it is a mistake, a dangerous mistake, to try to bring about outside pressures on Turkey, in order to impose their will.~~

Greeks have succeeded in bringing about such pressures. The US Congress, under the influence of the Greek Lobby in that country has decided to put an embargo on military aid to Turkey and has not changed this decision despite the efforts of the US Government.

Greeks put too much hope in these outside pressures. They thought Turkey would give in as a result of these pressure and therefore, at first they slowed down and then, completely cut off negotiations. But just the opposite has happened. Turks are indeed very keen on their national honour and it has become a matter of national honour not to give in to the threats of military aid embargo.

There has been an immense reaction to these pressures and threats in Turkey, and ~~she has reacted to a growing interventionism~~. This was indeed the main factor in the announcement of the Federated Turkish State, without waiting the result of the negotiations.

For the safeguard of the security of ~~the security~~ of Balkans and of the whole region. It is imperative that the two countries, Turkey and Greece, reach an internationally acceptable agreement.

There are two essential conditions for such a solution. First, the Island should remain independent as before. Second, there should be a new order on the Island, which would enable the two ethnic groups, the Turks and the Greeks, to live in peace and security without the necessity of further outside interventions.

It should be made quite clear that Turkey does not want any changes in the international status of the Republic of Cyprus. Also it should be understood that Turkey does not desire the partition of the Island. She is against the idea of one community dominating the other. She is willing to seek, together with Greece, and the two communities on the Island, a lasting and just solution which would take into account, the past experiences respecting the rights of each community, permitting them to live in peace and harmony. Turkey believes that the only permanent and just solution which offers all these, is a bi-regional federal system.

It may be said that, in principle, the views of the Balkan countries ~~excepting Greece~~, is in the same parallel as those of Turkey. Furthermore, the Balkan countries accept the existence of two communities with equal rights in Cyprus.

The differences of opinion lie mostly on the question of the recognition of the Makarios Government and the mode of solution of the problem.

Balkan countries recognize the Makarios Government as the only legal government of Cyprus. Turkey, however, considers Makarios administration, which has violated the constitutional order in Cyprus from the ~~very~~ beginning, only as the representative of the Greek community.

Although the Federation is accepted in principle by the Balkan countries, they believe that the form of federation has to be decided jointly upon by the two communities, by their own free will and without any foreign intervention.

Rumania and Yugoslavia have been concerned with the possibility that a further complication in Cyprus, might lead the super powers to intervene directly in Cyprus, thus creating the possibility of Soviet Russia demanding passage rights from their territories.

But one must point out here that Turkey, by insisting on the independence of Cyprus, by opposing both ENOSIS and partition has, in fact, prevented the direct intervention of the super powers in the problem.

Furthermore, Rumania might have been concerned that Soviet Union may use the Cyprus problem as a pretext, in order to push for "closer" cooperation between the Warsaw Pact countries. The Rumanian Foreign Minister, in his visit to Ankara ~~in May 1975~~, has confirmed his concern that the prolongation of the crisis might bring about such results and stating that the Problem has inevitably become an international problem.

He has, therefore, suggested between the concerned parties and the Balkan countries to permit an exchange of views in order to prevent the intervention of outside powers into matter.

Turkey has always believed that the problem should be solved by direct negotiations between the directly concerned parties and has not accepted the Rumanian proposal. According to the Turkish point of view to discuss the matter between the Balkan countries will further complicate the problem and will prepare the ground for undesirable outside interventions.

In Conclusion!

Cyprus will surely become a new trouble spot - a new threat - to peace in Eastern Mediterranean, if this problem infringes upon the détente between the super powers and push them into a new confrontation.

This surely is of vital interest to Warsaw Pact countries who are under the influence of the Soviet Union. Turkish Governments have been extremely careful to prevent such a confrontation. On the very first day of Turkish military operations in Cyprus, the Turkish Prime Minister of that time, Bulent Ecevit, stated openly that each step taken "will not endanger the détente, but would strengthen" it. His successors have also shown the same concern and sensitivity. It is because of this concern that Turkey refrained from occupying the whole Island, though she had the means and opportunity to do so. Turkey stopped at a point where she could guarantee the security of the Turkish community and also prevent ENOSIS.

In fact, this is Turkey's aim; to prevent the realization of the ENOSIS, the megalomaniacal idea which some people in Greece and Cyprus do not find necessary to hide. And also to bring about a permanent order on the Island which would make impossible persecutions suffered by the Turks since 1960's.

Turkey believes firmly that the just and realistic way of achieving these aims, is the establishment of a geographical federation within an independent and non aligned Republic of Cyprus. This is what Turkey wants.

Some people doubt the sincerity of this desire and think that Turkey's ultimate aim is to achieve the partition of the Island. This is an unfounded allegation.

The main reason for international sensitivity and concern over Cyprus arises from the strategic importance of the Island. The strategic importance of Cyprus concerns Turkey more directly than any other country, because the Island lies some 40 miles off her shores. It would be equally dangerous for Turkey, if the whole or a part of it were to be annexed to Greece. Greek Prime Minister Mr. Karamanlis has admitted that Greece has now been ~~island~~ fortifying the Dodecanese Islands which surround the Western approaches of Turkey. Greek presence on Cyprus would complete the encirclement of Turkey and provide a jumping point for Greeks. Turkey is, therefore, against both ENOSIS and "partition" which would mean the presence of Greek arms and forces on the Island.

Turkey and Greece, despite all the bad memories and strifes of the past are two countries which are forced by fate to live side by side, hopefully in peace and friendship. It is because of this, that after each conflict, they have signed pacts of friendship. It is not too late to reach a permanent and just solution on the Cyprus problem and on the problem of Aegean Sea, which has equally, if not more important. It is also yet not too late to establish Turkish-Greek friendship on more realistic foundations. But, it is vitally important that Greeks refrain from committing their past errors, and especially the error of bringing dangerous outside pressures to play. The only way lies in direct negotiations between the two communities.

It is quite possible that during the process, events will make Turkey and Greece less dependent on NATO and possibly lead them into new friendships and new treaties. This ^{may} ~~would~~ be a desirable development, both from the point of view of the interests of the two countries and also from the point of view of the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean.

It is debatable that polarization in two camps, the NATO and the Warsaw Pacts, has always served the peace and security of the region. New treaties and friendships in the region may possibly put an end to this rigid polarization and thus enhance the peace and security in the Balkans.

April, 1975.

izi ISTITUTO AFFARI
INTERNAZIONALI - ROMA

n° Inv. 10279

09 MAG. 1990

BIBLIOTECA