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The British Proposal on Cyprus

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
The British Proposal on Cyprus
(Statement by Senator Mike Mansfield - D., Montana)

According to reports in the press the United Kingdom has now suggested a new approach to the critical problem of Cyprus. The heart of the new proposal involves bringing the Greek and Turkish governments into the administration of the strife-torn island.

Although I have not yet seen the text of the British proposal, what has been suggested seems to be the beginning of a form of interim condominium of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom to replace exclusive British authority in Cyprus. If such is the case, the proposal of the United Kingdom deserves the most careful consideration of both Greece and Turkey and, indeed, of all the members of NATO. It may well offer a way around the dangerous impasse in Cyprus. It may well offer a way to end the shameful bloodletting on the island. It may offer a measure of solid security to this vital NATO base at a time of grave crisis in the Middle East. Finally, an interim period of cooperation instead of conflict among the three NATO nations directly involved in the Cypriot situation may open the way to an acceptable permanent solution to this perplexing problem.

I do not know what position, if any, our own government has taken on the proposal of the United Kingdom. It does seem to me, however, that if the plan is as reported, it is clearly a step in the right direction. The United States might well call upon all NATO members to join with us in urging that the Greek
and Turkish governments sit down with the British, at least to explore the Cypriot proposal. It would be inexcusable at such a critical time for any NATO member to reject out of hand any proposal which seeks to settle dangerous differences among nations of the organization.

On May 19 last, in a speech in the Senate on Europe and United States policies, I alluded to the Cypriot situation. There follows an excerpt from that speech which, I believe, has some relevance to the new British proposal.

"Perhaps the time has come to urge Greece, Turkey and Britain to seek an interim solution in Cyprus along the lines of a condominium of all three over the island and to assist them, if they wish, in finding this solution. I am aware that many avenues have been explored in an effort to settle the Cypriot dispute but I am not aware that that of condominium has been seriously considered. Nevertheless, an interim status of that kind could assure the continued security of the defense facilities of that strategic island, at least during the present critical time. It could also provide an opportunity to work out a permanent solution to the problem of ultimate sovereignty in an atmosphere of greater stability and shared responsibility. Certainly, it is not presumptuous on our part, as an ally to allies, to put forward this proposal in their interest, in our interest and in the interest of all the NATO members."
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