

Cyprus and the Folly of English Policy

Al-Jumhuriya, 11 March 1956.

That is how the English themselves describe it, according to the telegraph dispatches that have reached us, and in truth it is among the hardest of hard things to find for British policy in Cyprus a description truer or more precise than that it is a foolish policy, one that is hastening Cyprus toward attaining what it wants, and hastening the British toward the defeat that has been forced upon them, forced upon them, and which their minds know and their hearts believe. Yet they persist in arrogance and refuse to acknowledge it or submit to its verdict; for they cannot find, this time, the courage to bear the defeat that is inescapable, and to acknowledge that the age of colonialism and the enslavement of peoples has passed and will not return.

These days they are resuming the policy of exile, having already tried it before, and it availed them nothing, and they reaped from it nothing but defeat and humiliation.

They exiled a group of Egyptian leaders in the aftermath of the First World War, and then circumstances compelled them, by sheer necessity, to release them and leave them free to settle on the earth wherever they wished, and to return to their homeland whenever they wished. Then they negotiated with them and tried to attain some of their own purposes through them, but they attained nothing. Then they exiled others of them to a remote rock in the ocean, and were then compelled to release them in humiliation and send them back to their homeland in defeat, for the exile of the one group had availed them nothing, nor had the exile of the other, and this did not prevent them from submitting in the end to what there was no choice but to submit to, acknowledging some measures of independence, and then being compelled at last, by sheer necessity, to evacuate and to acknowledge for Egypt her full, complete independence.

She has tried exile outside Egypt as well, just as she has tried killing, torture, and imprisonment; and she has profited from none of it, little or much, nor has she been able to compel the peoples to the abasement and submission she wished upon them; rather, the peoples have compelled her to lift her violence from them, to restrain her might from them, and to turn her schemes away from them, and she then tries

afterward to win the goodwill of the peoples and to seek the means to their friendship, after having poured upon them torment and scheming of every kind. And now she is repeating her earlier conduct with this Greek island, scheming, plotting, torturing, imprisoning, and resorting at last to exiling the leaders.

In this she deceives herself more than she deceives the people of Cyprus; for they see and understand that the aspiration of peoples to freedom, independence, and dignity is stronger than any force, sharper than any weapon, more effective than any scheme, and greater than any dominion.

And the British see and hear that their ally and neighbor France exiled the Sultan of Morocco and a group of her leaders, and poured torment upon the free men of Morocco, and was then compelled at last to submit to the will of the Moroccan people, negotiating with the Sultan in his exile and then returning him to his homeland honored and secure, and then negotiating with him and with his government, and restoring to him and to the Moroccan people their independence and dignity; exile and torment availed her nothing.

And they see and hear the story of their neighbor and ally in Tunisia, just as they saw and heard her story in Indochina, yet they take no lesson from any of this, but instead resume along the very path they themselves had taken before, and that their ally and neighbor had taken, and from which both they and their allies and neighbors were then driven back, humiliated. And when God decrees defeat upon a people, He tempts them with folly, makes attractive to them the pursuit of their own desires, and turns them away from profiting by their own experience and the experience of oppressors before them and around them, so that they fall into error after error, add mistake to mistake, spend money and men to no avail, earn for themselves the disgrace of defeat, ill repute, and fallen prestige, and become a warning and an example to whoever wishes to take heed and learn, and become a laughingstock to those very people who wished to bring degradation upon them and inflict upon them the worst of torments.

And the British, by what they are doing in Cyprus, bring harm not upon British policy alone, nor upon British standing alone, but upon all their friends and allies together. For Cyprus is a Greek island, as history has always known it, and its people are Greek today and will be Greek tomorrow, and every wrong done to it is a wrong done to the whole Greek

people. And the Greek state is an ally of Great Britain, sharing with her in the NATO alliance, and so she is bringing harm upon a friendly, allied state, a partner in this alliance in which other states also take part, states whose goodwill and support Britain cannot do without.

And if she drives out the Greeks and compels them to leave this alliance, she will thereby harm the policy of this strange world that calls itself by a name no less strange than itself — the Free World; she will harm the United States, France, and the other states taking part in the NATO alliance, and she will turn the policy of Western democracy upside down in this corner of Europe, and open with her own hand, for the adversaries of the West, a door these adversaries never dreamed would be opened to them without their expending any effort or casting any scheme to open it.

And the Greek state is a member of another alliance upon which Western democracy depends entirely — the Balkan Pact ... and if Great Britain embarrasses her, by this foolish policy of hers in Cyprus, she may compel her to leave this alliance as well, and this structure upon which the Westerners have relied, and which they imagined to be a wall separating them from their Communist adversaries, will thereby collapse; and the apparent result of all this will be that Great Britain will have lost to Western policy two grave regions of the earth: this region in which the Greek state stands, on the one hand, and the region of the Arab world, through her absurd and foolish alliance in Baghdad, on the other.

And thus the reckoning that Great Britain must settle, before her allies first and before her own people and interests second, grows heavier; and there is no cause for all of this except that this British state, long known for its shrewdness and soundness of judgment, has grown headstrong, and has responded to nothing but an obstinacy that harms not herself alone, but harms along with her all of her allies as well.

And Great Britain knows full well that uniting Cyprus with her Greek homeland would do her no harm at all, for the Greek state is her ally, and she would not object to the continuation of British bases in Cyprus so long as these bases remain a necessity of Western defense. The Americans themselves have many bases in countries that are not their colonies, but are allies sharing with them various policies and interests, and needing, as they do, defense for their social order and their various interests.

For the American fleet has its bases in European ports, and the air force has its bases on European soil, and we know of no colonies, or anything resembling colonies, that America possesses in Europe.

How has Great Britain overlooked these elementary truths, which even the person least gifted with sound thinking about things would not overlook?

Be that as it may, it is certain that the exile of the Cypriot leaders, if it indicates anything, indicates that British policy has lost, in these days, the very thing by which it most distinguished itself — shrewdness and sound judgment of the consequences of things; and the exile of these leaders is good news that the people of Cyprus ought to welcome, and which they will indeed welcome with that bitter contentment known to oppressed peoples when despair presses hard upon them and their ordeal grows great — a contentment that fills souls with confidence and hearts with hope, and increases the keenness and reach of resolve, and the firmness and steadiness of resistance, and which will end, tomorrow or the day after, with the exiled men's return to their homeland, honored and secure, their hands filled with the good tidings of victory.

And I am entirely confident that these exiled leaders will return before long, just as the Sultan of Morocco returned, and will return bringing with them what the people of Cyprus desire: the fulfillment of their hopes and the satisfaction of that Greek dignity which has struggled against hardships and events for long centuries, and has learned at last how to overcome them and triumph over them.