The Cyprus Question: Its Dimensions, Implications, and Prospects for a Solution*

It is good to be speaking to you this evening. It is good to have this opportunity to share my thoughts with a distinguished audience of Americans seriously interested in the country which I represent and in the Mediterranean region of which it is a part.

At the same time, I am deeply distressed by the situation in which my country finds itself. I am distressed by the artificial division imposed on Cyprus by the Turkish invader; at the suffering imposed upon the Cypriot people, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots; at the huge losses, in lives and property, inflicted on my homeland; and by the fact that, more than five years after the invasion and occupation, the situation remains basically unremedied.

One of your great orators, Daniel Webster, more than a hundred years ago, said that justice “is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nation together.” Justice is what Cyprus is pleading for. What I intend to do this evening is to bring you up to date on the Cyprus situation to outline how the problem evolved; touch upon its present dimensions and its implications for the United Nations and the United States; and consider with you the prospects for its just and lasting solution and, more particularly, the role which the United States can play to this end.

I am certain that, to a knowledgeable audience such as you, there is no need to go into the geography, demography, and history of Cyprus. Let me simply remind you that Cyprus is an island of some 3,600 square miles and a population of some 650,000 (with a ratio of about 80 percent Greek Cypriots, 18 percent Turkish Cypriots, and the remainder Armenians, Maronites, Latins and others). Our recorded history goes back to 6000 B.C. Because of its location at the cross-roads of three continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa) and its natural wealth, Cyprus has been the object of foreign occupation through much of its long history. But throughout these years, it has retained its basic character and unity. It has often been a bone of contention and is now going

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through a very critical stage of its history. But I sincerely believe that it has
the full potential to become a bridge of peace and cooperation in the region.
Those of us who love Cyprus and care deeply for its present and future are
determined to work ceaselessly for this to happen. For this, however, we need
sympathetic understanding and effective support, and your great country is
uniquely placed to provide both of these.

Before I proceed further, it would be useful to define what is meant by
the “Cyprus Question.” As an international problem, the question of Cyprus
has been through various phases. In the fifties, it meant the Greek Cypriot
struggle against the colonial power (Great Britain) for self-determination,
and it was examined as such in successive sessions of the United Nations
General Assembly. It acquired an additional international dimension when
Britain, through the London Conference of 1955, sought to enlist the support
of Turkey (which had renounced all rights to Cyprus through the Treaty of
Lausanne in 1923) in order to avert the union of Cyprus with Greece. At the
same time, under the old principle of divide et impera, Britain instigated and
encouraged the Turkish Cypriot minority to assert itself and advocate in the
first stage, the continuation of British rule and, in a later stage, the partition
of the island and its annexation to Turkey. This phase ended with the Zurich-
London Agreements of 1959 which established the independence of Cyprus
within a rigid and inflexible framework of a Constitution and Treaties (the
Alliance”) which were worked out by the Governments of Greece, Turkey,
and the United Kingdom and which the leaders of the people of Cyprus had
no choice but to accept without any modification. Following the completion
of the transitional arrangements, the Republic of Cyprus was declared an
independent state in August 1960 and, in September of the same year, was
admitted to membership of the United Nations.

The second phase of the Cyprus Question was the period from December
1963 to July 1974. The complicated and rigid Constitution proved unwork-
able in certain important respects, and bona fide efforts for amending it
were made on the basis of the 13-point proposals put forward by President
Makarios. However, the attempted negotiations between the two Cypriot
communities were frustrated through the outright rejection of these propos-
als by the Turkish Government. As a result, intercommunal violence broke
out in December 1963. Amid threats and acts of intervention by Turkey, the
Cyprus Government appealed to the Security Council of the United Nations
seeking protection under the Charter against outside interference. Follow-
ing the abortive London Conference in January 1964, the Security Council
considered the issue in depth and adopted the landmark resolution 186 in
March 1964. This resolution, which was adopted by consensus, was based
on the premise that under the Charter, the use and the threat of force in