

PREMIER'S DRAMATIC PEACE BID.

Acting with imagination and characteristic political courage Mr. Macmillan flew to Athens to meet the Greek Prime Minister. Thus opened his powerful attempt to end the perilous state in Cyprus, now accelerating towards civil war. That the Premier should go himself vividly showed how critical was the situation. Also in Athens were Archbishop Makarios (exiled leader of the Greek Cypriots) and the Governor, of Cyprus, Sir Hugh Foot. Those two met, the day after Macmillan's arrival.

Cyprus itself, rent by communal strife (almost daily witnessing riots, assassination and arson) poses the toughest political problem since the world war. Greek Cypriots (four fifths of the population) have intensified guerrilla warfare against the British, yet find the time and fanatical energy to turn upon the minority of Turkish Cypriots.

The position was already bad when Field Marshal Harding arrived in Cyprus as Governor. He came, not as a soldier to tighten military control, but as a peacemaker, announcing that to meet Makarios would be his first step. He knew that the Archbishop was key man on the island. Also Sir John met the Turkish Mufti, who emphasized that the Union with Greece policy would arouse the Turks to action. What a dilemma for the Governor: an inflexible Archbishop deaf to the claims of the Turkish minority. Mass emotion was stirred again and again, as murdered Greek or Turkish Cypriots were borne to their graves.

British troops found military technique outflanked by the swift, hot-blooded assassins. "Murder Mile" was the name given to the shopping centre of Nicosia. How could this feud between Greeks and Turks possibly be resolved?

Many of the assassinated were victims of terrorist descending on the city from mountain hideouts. The army stepped up the search for the bandits. Many they found, but Grivas, the leader, defied the price on his head and eluded capture. Perhaps (thought the government), there would be peace if Archbishop Makarios could be got rid of. So, when Makarios, cheered by his flock, was leaving to visit Athens, he was apprehended and deported to the Seychelles.

When the Suez base was given up, Cyprus became more important than ever. Many of the troops were transferred there.

Cyprus remains a British base. Quite recently men left there to meet the Jordan emergency. Strategists declare that we must have Cyprus. In office at Government House is Sir Hugh Foot, the civilian who replaced Harding. More than once he has broadcast appeals to the people to end the campaign of terror. His wife and daughter behave no less calmly than he himself. From this deceptive oasis of peace the Prime Minister summoned Sir Hugh to Athens, to open negotiations with Archbishop Makarios. Mr. Macmillan's next move was to go to Athens, to meet the Prime Minister of Turkey.

Every peace-loving man and woman in the western world prays that success will reward the efforts in the Middle East of the Prime Minister.