

Bring the troops home from Cyprus

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THE League of Empire Loyalists once famously infiltrated an Archbishop Makarios look-alike into the Cyprus independence talks at Marlborough House. At the appointed moment the wraith-like figure stood and bellowed "Keep Cyprus British", before being dragged out. This light-hearted incident proved something of an exception. For the recent history of Cyprus is not a happy one, littered as it is with both refugees and corpses.

From the "Murder Mile" of 1950s Nicosia, where British squaddies ran the gauntlet of George Grivas's Eoka B guerrillas, to the Green Line which divides Greek from Turk in the city today, this has been a sorry tale of division and segregation. Britain's role, first as colonial power, then as supposed guarantor of the Cypriot constitution, has been perfidious in the extreme. As trouble flared earlier this month, the nightmare vision of Britain once again being thrust centre-stage in a conflict it helped foster, returned to haunt the grey men at the Foreign Office. For the policies of divide and rule which were perpetrated throughout the British Empire reached their nemesis in Cyprus. The minority Turks had been employed as lowly clerks and colonial policemen, but after independence in 1960 the Greek majority was unwilling to accommodate them. Flickering family cine-film from the mid 1960s shows the Turks of Famagusta scraping a living from an enclave of mud shacks, just as millions of black South Africans did from their segregated townships. The question then was not if the Turks would invade, but when. When the Greek Junta engineered a military coup in Cyprus to foster Grivas's dream of "enosis" with the mainland, the Turks dispatched their army, cruelly driving thousands of Greeks permanently from their homes. Famagusta has since been renamed Varosha. The Turks have left "the old city" and moved into the empty houses and flats of the departed Greeks.

British forces on the island at the two Sovereign base areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia kept studiously out of the conflict in 1974, staying inside their barracks, much to the consternation of the Greeks. They are still there. But does anyone know why? It is almost 30 years since a Labour government announced that it

was withdrawing from east of Suez. Why not west of Suez as well?

ACCORDING to a recent survey by Gallup, some 76 per cent of people in Britain believe that "there is a class struggle going on". This compares with 56 per cent who thought the same in 1961. This remarkable revelation has given the left new zest to challenge the dismal fare of moderation and modernisation that is currently being served up. But for two small newspapers, the class war is currently on hold. Tribune has made common cause with the extremely rightwing editor of the Literary Review, Auberon Waugh, to prosecute a new struggle in which left and right unite and fight. Our sworn enemy is retail news-agent giant WH Smith, which earlier this year cleared its shelves of a whole range of small publications including Tribune, and which has since come up with another wheeze to make life miserable for small magazines and newspapers. Bill Cockburn, the WH Smith chief executive, now proposes a new "retail distribution allowance" on smaller publications. For "allowance" substitute "charge" and you get the picture. Mr Cockburn recently wrote a letter to Labour MPs who had protested in Parliament. He wrote: "There was a large number of slow-moving titles on the shelves, which rather than enhancing consumer choice, was making access to titles that people really wanted to buy more difficult." Such gobbledegook goes a long way to explaining how WH Smith have simply lost their touch. It may be inconvenient for customers to have to stand on their toes to reach past Tribune and the Literary Review for their copy of Mayfair or Asian Babes, but how is consumer choice extended by removing choice?

THE latest ABC figures show that small publications have lost 20 per cent of sales in the past year. This catastrophic collapse owes much to the attitude of companies such as WH Smith. Recently the supermarket giant Asda decided to expand the number of publications they sell, so providing hope that the odd copy of the Literary Review or Tribune could find its way past the legions of dreary cookery and computer glossies. Perhaps we will have to await legislation that allows magazines a right to distribution and display, as exists elsewhere in Europe. But until that happens, the unholy alliance of left and right will continue. Who knows, perhaps Auberon Waugh can be persuaded to join Michael Foot in a picket outside WH Smith's. They might even give the class struggle a bit of impetus.

Mark Seddon is editor of Tribune. Paul Foot is away

