

Settlers outnumber Turkish Cypriots

Illegal Turkish settlement of the occupied area and an accelerating exodus of Turkish Cypriots were highlighted on 24 April by Government Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou, who said that settlers now formed a clear majority.

Mr Papapetrou said that the number of settlers from Turkey "far outweighs the number of Turkish Cypriots" and that if the 30,000 Turkish occupation troops were included the preponderance was even greater. He added that deteriorating economic conditions in the north were impelling growing numbers of Turkish Cypriots to leave and that thousands of visa applications were pending at foreign embassies. □

Turkey's manoeuvre

Turkey's latest manoeuvres to avoid compliance with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the Titina Loizidou case were condemned by Cyprus Government Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou on 10 April, following disclosures that Ankara was seeking Council of Europe agreement to non-payment of the \$900,000 fine and costs imposed by the ECHR in 1997 and 1999 until a Cyprus settlement was reached.

Mr Papapetrou said that Turkey's proposal to evade ECHR penalties for denying Ms Loizidou her property rights in the occupied area was "totally unacceptable" and stressed that the Government also rejected the Turkish demand that the Loizidou ruling should not be regarded as a precedent for the many similar cases pending before the ECHR. □

Tziakourmas freed

The release of abducted Greek Cypriot Panicos Tziakourmas on April 26 was greeted with relief by his family and satisfaction by the Government, combined with anger that he had been subjected to a long ordeal by the Turkish Cypriot "authorities" and had been freed too late to see his dying mother.

The Pyla building contractor, who had been abducted by Turkish forces in December from within the British base at Dhekelia, was released after being "convicted" by a "court" in Famagusta on drugs charges. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, but the "court" ordered his release in view of the time he had spent in custody.

Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides said that Mr Tziakourmas had been held hostage by a "ruthless occupation regime with no scruples", which had been prepared to use an innocent man as a bargaining counter.

●Mr Tziakourmas announced on 29 April that he and his family intended to sue Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights. □



•A free man...Tziakourmas on his release.



•New water era... The new Larnaca desalination plant ensures water supplies to all households.

Desalination plant heralds new era

Cyprus' second desalination plant was inaugurated by President Clerides on 23 April, heralding a new era in which the supply of water would be assured and the shortages of the past would become a bad memory. Among the distinguished guests at the ceremony was Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who was paying an official visit to Cyprus.

Located near Larnaca airport, the plant will produce 52,000 cubic metres of water a day and will enable the authorities to guarantee a continuous supply to every household in the Government-controlled area. It was constructed to European and WHO environmental and health standards by a Cypriot-Israeli joint venture under self-financing arrangements at a capital cost of £20 million.

Speaking at the inauguration, President Clerides said that the plant, the largest planned by the Government, marked the start of a new era for Cyprus, while at the same

time stressing that the Government's water policy had many other strands. These included treatment of waste water for irrigation, the enrichment of aquifers, the exploitation of subterranean brackish water and the development of crops which required less water to flourish. The Government would also continue to promote the importance of water-saving measures and proper use of water by the public.

Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Costas Themistocleous paid tribute to the Israeli role in building the plant and recalled that his personal co-operation with Mr Peres on water dated from 1989. He said that, although water supply to households was now assured, the agricultural sector would probably depend on rainfall for some years to come. The Government would continue to support the sector, while seeking to reduce dependency on rainfall, and expected to be able to announce some "good news" in the near future. □

Support reaffirmed by Commonwealth

The firm support of the Commonwealth for a Cyprus settlement based on UN Security Council resolutions was stressed by Secretary General Don McKinnon in a meeting with President Clerides on 24 April. Mr McKinnon said that the Commonwealth would stand by the Cypriot people and Government to ensure that a "sustainable" solution could be achieved.

The top Commonwealth official also had discussions with Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides, who briefed him on developments in the Cyprus problem and on Cyprus' European Union accession course. Mr Kasoulides stressed the importance which the Government attached to Commonwealth membership, which enabled Cyprus to be "actively engaged in affairs that concern the whole globe".

●Mr McKinnon was in Cyprus for a conference of the executive heads of the Association of Commonwealth Universities held in Nicosia on 23-26 April. In an address to the conference read out by Education and Culture Minister Ouranios Ioannides, President Clerides described plans for the expansion of tertiary education in Cyprus, including the creation of an Open University, and said that the aim was establish Cyprus as an international and regional education centre. □

Suspect Yugoslav accounts uncovered

Two possible cases of money-laundering by Yugoslav nationals via Cyprus have been uncovered by the Cypriot authorities and full details forwarded to Belgrade, disclosed Government Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou on 9 April. He stressed that there was no evidence that Cypriots were involved or that any laws had been broken.

The inquiries in Cyprus are being carried out by the Anti-Fraud Unit in accordance with pledges given to the Yugoslav authorities of full co-operation in investigating claims that offshore companies have been used by members of the former Milosevic regime to launder stolen funds.

Mr Papapetrou said that in the two cases uncovered there was no indication whether the funds involved had come from Yugoslavia or when they had been transferred to Cyprus. He expressed confidence that Cyprus had in no way violated its international obligations to combat money-laundering.

●Mr Papapetrou also disclosed that Attorney General Alecos Markides had ordered a probe into claims made during a US court case that Cyprus had been used for money-laundering by the Islamic terrorist organization headed by Osama bin Laden, commenting that if the claims had any substance they "probably related to illegal activities in the occupied area". □