

ETUDES HELLENIQUES

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**La République de Chypre: 50
ans après**

**The Republic of Cyprus: 50
Years After**

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The Republic of Cyprus: 50 years after

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Historical Preview

After a long anti-colonial struggle, Cyprus became independent in 1960. There had been earlier, in 1954, the incredible statement of the British Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Henry Hopkinson, that Cyprus would never be granted full independence followed by the EOKA armed struggle from 1955 to 1959.¹ In 1958, Archbishop Makarios, abandoning the goal of Enosis, union with Greece, stated in favor of the independence of the island. By the end of 1958-early 1959, the Greek Government negotiated directly with Turkey on the principle of independence. On February 11, 1959, Athens and Ankara concur on this principle with the agreement of Zurich. On February 19, 1959 a treaty was signed in London between Greece, Turkey and Britain taking note that the treaty had been accepted by the Representative of the Greek-Cypriot Community, Archbishop Makarios, and the Representative of the Turkish-Cypriot Community, Dr. Fasil Küçük. The Treaty of London provided an outline of the Cyprus Constitution which was developed later.

The independence, granted by the Treaty of London, was characterized by one observer, the French diplomat Jean-François Drevet, as a «false» independence due to several restrictions imposed on the new state. The same observer also questions whether the Constitution imposed on Cypriots in 1960 was not a kind of apartheid.² In fact, the Treaty of Establishment imposes on Cyprus a limited sovereignty and guarantees the rights that the three powers were arrogated to impose, such as their military presence on the island and the right to intervene in its internal affairs by treaties concluded between them for these purposes. Furthermore Britain arrogated to itself the right to keep sovereign military bases on the island with an area of 255 km², or 2.8% of the Cypriot territory.

The constitution reserved 30% of government jobs to the Turkish minority of 18.3%. This proportion was even higher, attaining 40% in the army of the Re-

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public. Also in this division of powers in favor of the Turks, the Constitution was putting the two communities on an equal footing in many cases, forcing them to decide together. In reality, the executive power was shared between a president from the Greek community and a vice-president from the Turkish community. The Turkish vice-president had a veto over most decisions of the executive. It was mandatory that the choice of ministers and senior officials and the promulgation of laws be made by agreement of both the President and the Vice-President. The legislature, the House of Representatives, consisted of 15 Turks and 35 Greeks, a disproportionate analogy, giving to Turks 30% of the seats, while they represented only 18.3% of the population. But what was even worse for the functioning of the legislature was the constitutional provision requiring separate majorities for the most important cases, particularly taxation. Thus, only eight Turkish MPs were able to block any decision of the House of Representatives.

The judiciary was also shared between the two communities. The Constitutional Court, which was conducting significant trade-offs in the executive and legislature, was composed of one judge from each community, while the presidency was assured by a foreigner.

More importantly, the new State was in practice under a tripartite supervision, that of Great Britain, Greece and Turkey. Indeed, the Treaty of Guarantee, signed on August 16, 1960, gave a right of intervention to the three guarantor powers, Britain, Greece and Turkey, either by agreement or separately, to restore constitutional order. Legal experts of international reputation, however, have found early this treaty as running counter to international law and UN Charter, especially as long as Cyprus became a member of this international organization and, later, of the European Union. Moreover, Cyprus in 1964 denounced the treaty of guarantee because of the Turkish threats to intervene militarily on the island. On the other hand the Turkish military intervention in 1974, justified by the existence of the treaty of guarantee, would restore constitutional order on the island. Instead, although the coup had failed in less than ten days, the Turkish invasion was maintained, cutting the island in two.

Proposed Revision of the Constitution

In these conditions, «it was obvious that the formation of compromise was not viable.»³ Archbishop Makarios presented a paper proposing a revision of the constitution, with 13 amendments. The British role in this case is suspect. Thus, the British were at the beginning in favor of this revision and the British High Commissioner in Nicosia even participated in the formulation of these points. Later they tried to deny their involvement, leaving all responsibility to Makarios. The

proposed revision favored the abolition of the separate elements of the Constitution. So the president and vice-president of the Chamber of representatives would be elected jointly by the two communities, one of the separate votes would also be abolished and there would be no separate Turkish municipalities in the cities.

In December 1963, a Turkish insurrection took place in Nicosia after a minor police incident, which tried to search a car driven by the Turkish Cypriots. The police suspected that the car was carrying weapons. The Turkish Cypriot ministers and officials have left office, while under the influence of Turkey was established a separate administration. There was, thus, the creation of the Turkish enclaves which comprised the largest part of Nicosia, separated by the Green Line established by the British. Indeed, the British army was responsible for enforcing the cease-fire occurred on Dec. 30, 1963.

Faced with the threat of Turkish intervention, the Cyprus government addressed the Security Council of the United Nations on March 4, 1964, which decided that the Government of the Republic was the only representative of the island even in the absence of Turkish Cypriots who had left. By the same decision, was created a peacekeeping force, UNFICYP, which was sent to the island.

Efforts to Resolve the Crisis

Between 1964 and 1967, there have been various efforts to resolve the Cyprus crisis. Americans, fearing Soviet influence on the island, got involved and mandated the former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to assist parties to reach a compromise. Acheson prepared the plan that bears his name, which apparently included the Enosis. In practice, it was a plan for partition of the island as it planned to cede to Turkey the peninsula of Karpas in order to establish a military base. In fact, there have been various versions of the plan Acheson and one of these versions was expected to yield even to Turkey the Greek island of Kastelorizo. Acheson had himself admitted later that his plan was presented to the Greeks as that of Enosis and to the Turkish Cypriots as that of the partition.⁴

The American effort had as main objective to avoid conflict between the two NATO allies, Greece and Turkey, which would weaken the southeastern flank of NATO. These efforts were not successful because the parties concerned and, in particular, Archbishop Makarios did not accept the American plan.

In August 1964 the Turkish Air Force bombed the western part of Cyprus, Tillyria, when the Cypriot military forces tried to prevent the creation of a Turkish enclave in the region.

The installation of the military dictatorship in Greece in 1967 was catastrophic for Cyprus. The Greek colonels withdrew from Cyprus the Greek military force, sent to the island by the democratic government of George Papandreou. The policy, which till then previously provided for the union with Greece, was abandoned in favor of a solution that favored an independent state. The Greek military junta has continued to intervene in Cyprus and support a series of subversive acts against the government of Archbishop Makarios.

The Coup and the Turkish Intrevention

On July 15, 1974, a coup organized by the National Guard controlled by the junta overthrew Makarios, giving a pretext for military intervention of Turkey on July 20, 1974. A second intervention between 15 and 16 August 1974 led to the occupation of 37% of the island by Turkey.

Turkey intervened ostensibly to restore constitutional order. The authorities from the coup lasted only eight days. The constitutional order was restored quickly, not by Turkey, but by international pressure and the president Archbishop Makarios returned to Cyprus in December 1974. However, the Turkish occupation of part of the island continues since, and in addition Ankara is trying to change the demographics by colonization.

The Post-1974

Several rounds of negotiations since 1974 until today have not been successful due to Turkish intransigence and its effort to keep the island divided by a military presence that exceeds 40,000 soldiers. In addition, there is a systematic destruction of the historic cultural heritage of the occupied part. A plan prepared by the Secretary General Kofi Annan was rejected by the Greeks of Cyprus in a referendum held on April 24, 2004. This plan actually kept the Turkish presence on the island and transformed the Republic of Cyprus into a protectorate. Further talks between the parties resumed later, but without success so far.

The bottom line of the Cyprus issue is the avowed purpose of Turkey having Cyprus, directly or indirectly, under its control. The current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Ahmet Davoutoglou wrote in a cynical and unscrupulous way, admitting that the so-called protection of Turkish Cypriots was only a pretext. Thus in his book entitled *Strategic Depth* he stated, after a thorough analysis of the Cyprus's Strategic importance, that «even if not a single Turk lived on the island., Turkey would have an interest in Cyprus», precisely because of its strategic importance.⁵

An important step in strengthening the international position of the Republic of Cyprus was joining the European Union on May 2004. Cyprus is also a member of several international organizations, reinforcing its international position. We must not forget that Ankara supported the effort, at times by the British and Americans, to replace the Cypriot state, internationally recognized by a hybrid state structure under its own control.

Despite these vicissitudes, the progress made by the Republic of Cyprus, during its fifty years of independence, has been considerable. Between 1960 and 1974, the average annual growth rate of gross domestic product exceeded the 7%. The annual inflation rate did not exceed 2.2% and, socially, there have been implemented various measures in terms of health and social security. The democratic system was also strengthened.

After 1974, despite the fact that the Turkish invasion destroyed much of the economy of Cyprus, Cyprus has managed to overcome the effects of the occupation and achieve a high level of economic growth. In 1981, Cyprus, for what was called an «economic miracle», has once again become a prosperous country. Of course, today the country faces serious economic problems, largely because of global economic instability, but also partly because of economic management which has become defective over time.

Some Aspects of the Cypriot Reality

In this volume of *Études helléniques-Hellenic Studies*, we try to present some aspects of the Cypriot reality during the years of independence.

Fotini Psaltakis, in her article, notes that Cyprus is an area of important geo-strategic and geo-economic casting. A space where power relations, strategies of power and the recurrence of power struggles help to maintain a geopolitical balance is particularly fragile.

Phivos Klokkaris raises the question of security that he believes it is linked to the problems facing Cyprus. The author examines this question in its true dimension and argues that security is a prerequisite for peace, freedom and democracy.

Christos Iacovou examines the interconnections between geopolitics and grand strategy in the context of the Cyprus issue. He analyzes the formation of the Turkish strategy based on the geopolitical position of Cyprus, since 1950 until today. In addition, the author compares adaptations and Turkish policy on Cyprus to those of Greece since the Turkish invasion of 1974.

Despina Michael reviews the first stage of the relationship between the Republic of Cyprus and the Soviet Union from a number of documents of the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of Cyprus and other sources between 1960 and 1964. The author focuses on major concerns of the Soviet Union and in particular on the activities of NATO in Eastern Mediterranean.

Jean Catsiapis, in his article, reviews the most important decisions of the Court of Justice of European Communities and the European Court of Human Rights, which evoke the consequences of the invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish army in 1974. He analyzes the decisions of European courts to punish violations of international law by Turkey and its army, to the detriment of the Republic of Cyprus and its citizens.

In another sphere of interest, that of the literature, Lefteris Papaleontiou shows schematically Cypriot contemporary literature. The author follows the evolution of this literature of the past 50 years, during the period of independence. The author focuses on the achievements of the literature of this period in Cyprus but is limited, however, to poetry and prose. He concludes that contemporary literature of Cyprus is on track and it tends to follow the evolution of modern Greek literature.

Maria Herodotou, in her article, analyzes the Cypriot prose writings in the context of postcolonial theory, to show the evolution of the colonial experience as seen by Cypriot writers. She focuses on the prose writings since 1950, mainly referring to the anti-colonial struggle. She examines, in particular, the response by Cypriot writers in colonial discourse by Lawrence Durrell in his novel *Bitter Lemons*. The article also discusses briefly the post-colonial period and in particular how the authors are presenting independence and contemporary political developments based on different ideologies.

Jean Caravolas, in his article, presents the novelist Nikos Nikolaidis-the Cypriot, considered the best contemporary writer of Cyprus. He argues that Nikolaidis was admitted to the pantheon of Neo-Hellenic literature during his lifetime and his writings still continue to interest, to be published, studied and honored, both in Greece and Cyprus.

Fifty years after its independence, Cyprus has managed to survive a plethora of plots and threats as well as the Turkish military intervention of 1974, save its international personality and becoming a member of the European Union. Next year the country will assume the EU presidency, which for a small state is in itself an achievement. Nevertheless Cyprus still faces threats from Ankara and in the context of the current international crisis it is confronted to economic difficulties. However, the probable discovery of natural gas in its Exclusive Economic Zone reveals a new element that could foster new alliances in the region in favor of a changing regional geopolitical equilibrium. The rapprochement with Israel

and the interest of major powers for the energy resources of the region, good relations with Russia - which has helped Cyprus with a loan in the current challenging environment- constitute arguments in favor of the Republic of Cyprus. Provided of course that its political elites can exploit the new geopolitical context that is being formed in the region while positioning the island in a strong position against Turkey's threats.

NOTES

1. The British Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Henry Hopkinson during a debate in the House of Commons on Cyprus, declared that there were certain territories in the Commonwealth 'which...can never expect to be fully independent'.
2. Jean-Francois Drevet, *Cyprus, the Extreme Island, Chronicle of a Forgotten Europe*, Paris, Editions Syros / Alternatives, 1991, p.143-150.
3. Alain Blondy, *Cyprus*, Paris, Que-sais-je? Presses Universitaires de France, 1998, p.116
4. T. A. Couloumbis, *The United States, Greece and Turkey. The Troubled Triangle*, New York, Praeger, 1983, p.46-47.
5. Ahmet Davoutoglou, *The Strategic Depth* (ed. Greek), Athens, Poioitita Publishing, 2009, p. 275.