

## **CYPRUS: THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE**

*CIA World Fact Book*

The roots of the Cyprus conflict lie in the striving of the Greek Cypriot majority for unification, or enosis, with Greece, an idea that emerged during the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s and developed under British colonial rule. Popular sentiment for enosis, joined with resentment of British tax policies, ignited in 1931 in a brief but widespread uprising, during which the British Government House in Nicosia was burned; 6 Cypriots were killed and 2,000 arrested by British authorities. From then on enosis strengthened its appeal in the Greek Cypriot community; however, a clampdown on Cypriot political activity and the exigencies of World War II precluded any violent manifestation for twenty-four years.

The barely suppressed desire for enosis erupted, on April 1, 1955, when bombs destroyed the transmitter of the Cyprus broadcasting station and exploded at British Army and police installations in Nicosia, Limassol, Famagusta, and Larnaca. The explosions signaled the beginning of a guerrilla war against the British colonial administration that was to continue for four years and claim some 600 lives. The Greek Cypriots fought under the banner of the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston--EOKA), led by Colonel (later General) George Grivas. Although EOKA included only a few hundred active guerrillas, it enjoyed wide support in the Greek Cypriot community and was able to tie down about 10,000 British soldiers.

However, when EOKA called a cease-fire in March 1959, after the signing in February of the agreements that led to Cypriot independence, it could claim only partial success. The Cypriot tie to Britain was broken sooner than it would have been without the guerrilla struggle, but EOKA's goal of enosis remained unmet.

For members of the Turkish Cypriot minority, who regarded Turkey as their motherland, enosis would have meant becoming a much smaller minority within the Greek nation. In the mid-1950s, Turkish Cypriots responded to the growth of EOKA with the formation of their own paramilitary organization, Volkan (volcano), which later became the Turkish Resistance Organization (Türk Mukavemet Teskilâtu--TMT). British authorities also armed a paramilitary police force composed entirely of Turkish Cypriots, the Mobile Reserve, to help in combat terrorism. The intense intercommunal violence of 1958 implanted a bitterness in both ethnic communities and foreshadowed post-independence strife that would tear the young nation apart.

Three interrelated treaties in February 1959, and the subsequent adoption of a constitution, resulted in Cyprus's gaining its independence on August 19, 1960. Under the Treaty of Establishment, Britain retained sovereign rights over two areas to be used as military bases. The Treaty of Alliance stipulated that contingents of 950 Greek troops and 650 Turkish troops were to provide for the defense of the island and train a new Cypriot army. Under the Treaty of Guarantee, in the event of a threat to the established political arrangements of Cyprus, the treaty's signatories, Greece, Turkey, and Britain, were to consult on appropriate measures to safeguard or restore them; the signatories were granted the right to intervene together or, if concerted action proved impossible, to act unilaterally to uphold the settlement. These elaborate arrangements came to provide the pretexts for repeated foreign intervention that severely

undermined Cypriot security, and for Turkey's unilateral military action in 1974, which led to the de facto partition of the island.

### **Intercommunal Violence, 1963-67**

Three years of peace followed Cypriot independence in 1960. Beneath the peace, however, lay the resentment of some Greek Cypriots at the prevention of enosis and a growing conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots over the bi-communal provisions of the constitution. The Cypriot army, which was to consist of 1,200 Greek Cypriots and 800 Turkish Cypriots, never materialized because of differences over the six-to-four formula for integrating the force. EOKA had officially disbanded and surrendered its weapons in 1959, and Grivas had returned to Greece. In fact, however, many former EOKA members had retained their weapons, and some joined groups of armed irregulars. The Turkish Cypriot community responded to the growth of these groups by reviving the TMT in early 1962. These forces received arms and assistance from the Greek and Turkish contingents assigned to the island.

In late November 1963, the president, Archbishop Malarias, introduced a thirteen-point proposal to amend the constitution in a way that would ensure the dominance of Greek Cypriots. In the tense atmosphere that ensued, a street brawl broke out on December 21 in Nicosia, between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriot police. This fight was followed by major attacks by Greek Cypriot irregulars in Nicosia and Larnaca. Looting and destruction of Turkish villages forced many Turkish Cypriots to withdraw into defensible enclaves guarded by the TMT paramilitary. Fearful that Turkey might carry out its threat to invade, Malarias agreed to British intervention from its bases on the island. On December 27 British troops assumed positions between opposing irregular units, and the fighting, which had claimed 100 lives on each side during the previous week, subsided temporarily. The cease-fire held in Nicosia, but by mid-February 1964 Greek Cypriot attacks at Limassol brought a renewed threat of Turkish landings. Britain appealed to the UN Security Council, and on March 4, 1964, the UN approved a resolution to establish an international peace-keeping force for duty in Cyprus. Contingents from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden joined the British soldiers already in place; together they made up the 6,500-member United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which was still present on the island, though at much reduced strength, a quarter of a century later.

In June 1964, the National Guard was formed by the Greek Cypriot government, which also instituted male conscription. The National Guard absorbed the various private armies into a single national military force loyal to the government and served as a deterrent to a Turkish invasion. Greek Army soldiers were clandestinely transferred to the guard on a large scale; by midsummer the National Guard consisted of an estimated 24,000 officers and men, about half from the Greek Army. Grivas, thought to be the only man who could enforce discipline over the disparate armed Greek Cypriot factions, returned from Athens to command the National Guard. Meanwhile, the Turkish Cypriot community, in its newly created enclaves, organized militarily under the TMT, supported by conscription of Turkish Cypriot youths. Turkish Army troops trained the Turkish Cypriot forces, totaling an estimated 10,000 fighters, and directed the defense of the enclaves. Outbreaks of fighting continued, although the presence of UNFICYP prevented them from erupting into major hostilities. In August 1964, the National Guard carried out a coordinated sea and land assault against Kicking on the northwest coast, in an effort to cut off

the major Turkish Cypriot supply line to the mainland. Heavy attacks by Turkish jet fighter-bombers, operating beyond the range of the Greek Air Force, halted the Greek Cypriot offensive.

Several years of peace followed, while the two communities improved their military readiness. In November 1967, units of the National Guard, at the instigation of Grivas, launched a massive artillery assault on two Turkish Cypriot villages following a dispute over police patrols. The crisis was defused when United States mediation brought an agreement that endured for the next seven years: all foreign troops in excess of those permitted by the Treaty of Alliance were to be removed from Cyprus, and the National Guard was to be dismantled in exchange for an immediate Turkish demobilization. Grivas was recalled to Athens, along with about 10,000 of the Greek troops assigned to the National Guard. The National Guard, however, was not dissolved.

### **Conflict Within the Greek Cypriot Community, 1967-74**

During the next seven years, events in Cyprus were shaped by the differences over enosis that arose between Makarios and the military government that was installed in Greece after a coup d'état in 1967. Convinced of Turkey's willingness to use its superior force to prevent enosis, Makarios began to seek support among Greek Cypriots--especially those in the communist party--who rejected enosis, at least for the near future, in favor of an independent, nonaligned Cyprus. Because Makarios had decided enosis was no longer possible in the short term, more adamant pro-enosis Cypriot groups and anticommunist Greek officers, both of which infiltrated the National Guard during the late 1960s and early 1970s, would subvert his government increasingly after 1967 and finally overthrow him in 1974.

Makarios failed in his efforts to limit the autonomy of the National Guard, which, under the influence of right-wing Greek officers, remained attached to enosis and bitterly opposed to Makarios's political association with the communist party. Compulsory military service for all Greek Cypriot males--for a period that increased from six months to two years during the 1960s--allowed the arming and training of a great number of men, many of whom subsequently took up arms against the government. Between 1969 and 1971, several groups embarked on a renewed terrorist campaign for enosis. Grivas returned clandestinely to Cyprus sometime in the late summer or early fall of 1971 and set up a new guerilla organization, the national Organization of Cypriot Fighters (Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agonist B--EOKA B). Most members of the terrorist movement held regular jobs in the Greek Cypriot community; half were police officials and members of the National Guard.

There was also considerable evidence of support of EOKA B activities by the Greek junta, whose hostility to Makarios became increasingly apparent during the early 1970s. The junta was believed to be involved in several attempts on the life of President Makarios. In March 1970, Makarios narrowly escaped death when his helicopter was shot down. Makarios walked away from the crash, but his pilot was killed. Former minister of the interior Polykarpos Georkajis, in contact with local right-wing groups and the junta in Athens, was thought to be implicated, and was assassinated shortly afterward. A paramilitary presidential guard loyal to Makarios, called the Tactical Police Reserve, was organized in 1972. Consisting of fewer than 1,000 men, the Tactical Police Reserve succeeded in arresting large numbers of EOKA B guerrillas. In a further

attempt to bring subversive forces under control, Makarios dismissed many National Guard and police officers suspected of EOKA B activity.

With the death of Grivas from a heart attack in January 1974, EOKA B came more directly under the control of the military junta in Athens, which, after a change of leadership, was even more hostile to Makarios. The archbishop, however, saw the Greek-officered National Guard as a more serious threat to his government than EOKA B. In a letter to the Greek president in early July, he accused the junta of attempting to subvert the government of Cyprus through the Greek officers of the National Guard, who in turn supported the terrorist activities of EOKA B. Makarios demanded immediate removal of the 650 Greek officers staffing the National Guard and their replacement by 100 instructors who would help reorganize the Greek Cypriot force.

The reply to the Makarios challenge came on July 15 in the form of a coup d'état led by Greek officers in the National Guard, under orders from Athens. The fierce fighting that broke out resulted in casualties estimated at over 500, but the lightly armed Tactical Police Reserve and irregular pro-Makarios units were no match for the heavily armed National Guardsmen and the EOKA B irregulars. Narrowly escaping capture when the presidential palace was bombarded, Makarios was flown to London from the Sovereign Base Area at Akrotiri. Former EOKA gunman and convicted murderer Nicos Sampson, notorious for his brutality in the 1950s and 1960s, was proclaimed president. As Makarios had foreseen, but the Greek military leaders did not, Turkey reacted forcibly to the coup by landing a large number of troops on the northern coast of Cyprus. As a result, both the insurrectionary government in Cyprus and the military dictatorship in Greece fell from power.

### **The Turkish Military Intervention, July-August 1974**

Citing the Treaty of Guarantee as the basis for its action, Turkey launched its seaborne assault west of Kyrenia on July 20, 1974. About 6,000 men participated in the landing force, which was followed shortly afterwards by about 1,000 paratroopers dropped north of Nicosia. Turkish Cypriot irregulars joined the Turkish regulars in both areas, but they faced fierce opposition from the National Guard. Kyrenia did not come under Turkish control until heavy sea and air bombardment drove out Greek Cypriot troops on the third day of fighting. Meanwhile, Turkish Cypriot enclaves throughout the southern part of the island fell to Greek Cypriot forces. Only in Nicosia was the Turkish Cypriot enclave successfully defended by TMT irregulars, with the aid of the Turkish Air Force.

When a UN-imposed cease-fire took effect on July 22, Turkish troops held a triangular area in northern Cyprus with Kyrenia in the center of its base along the coast and northern Nicosia at its apex. Clear Turkish superiority in personnel and equipment deterred Greek leaders from intervening. Nearly half the Turkish Cypriot population lay outside the occupied area, in enclaves now controlled by the National Guard. During the next three weeks, while foreign ministers from Britain, Greece, and Turkey met in Geneva, Turkish troops continued to seize control of areas outside the cease-fire lines, broadening the triangle under their occupation. Their troop strength was augmented through the Kyrenia bridgehead to some 40,000 soldiers and 200 tanks.

On August 14, immediately on the breakup of the second round of Geneva talks, two divisions of the Turkish Army advanced beyond their cease-fire positions. During the three-day offensive, Greek Cypriot resistance crumpled under heavy air, armor, and artillery bombardment. Civilians, alarmed by reports of atrocities during the first Turkish campaign, fled ahead of the advancing troops, who proceeded unimpeded through much of northern Cyprus. By August 16, the Turkish advance had reached the predetermined "Attila Line," behind which troops occupied 37 percent of Cypriot territory, and Turkey ordered a cease-fire. Although authoritative figures on casualties were not published, it was estimated that Greek Cypriot forces suffered 6,000 casualties, while Turkish-led forces lost 1,500 dead and 2,000 wounded.

### **De Facto Partition, 1974-Present**

About 180,000 people, an estimated one-third of the population of Cyprus, became refugees during the fighting. The buffer zone occupied by UNFICYP, between the two cease-fire lines, marked the almost total segregation of the Greek and Turkish ethnic communities. At first, tensions were high along the buffer zone, which extended for 180 kilometers across the island and was in most places 3-7 kilometers wide (although as narrow as 20 meters in the center of Nicosia). Sporadic exchanges of gunfire across the lines and infiltrations by Turkish patrols gradually subsided. By the close of 1978, the UN reported that the cease-fire lines were almost completely stabilized. During most of the 1980s, cease-fire violations were confined mostly to occasional incidents of misbehavior by individual soldiers.

All but a few hundred Greek Cypriots fled from the Turkish-occupied area in the north or were induced to leave in the period following the 1974 fighting. As of late 1989, only 611 Greek Cypriots lived under Turkish occupation, almost all of them in the Karpas Peninsula. A further 276 Maronites were in the north. Only about 100 Turkish Cypriots remained in the south. Turkish soldiers who had fought on Cyprus were allowed to settle with their families and given homes. In addition, a significant number of immigrants from Turkey had been allowed to settle in the north. Both the Turkish Cypriot refugees from the south and the settlers from Turkey were granted homes and property abandoned by Greek Cypriots. The presence of Turkish immigrants, the appropriation of property, and the fate of more than 1,600 Greek Cypriots missing since the 1974 fighting complicated the prospects of a settlement to end the division of the island.

Beginning in 1976, a succession of low- and high-level meetings, intercommunal talks, and talks initiated by the UN Secretary General made progress on some issues but, as of late 1990, had failed to achieve a political solution.