

CYPRUS

A Country Still Divided



A History of Foreign Interventions, Militarisation and Nationalism THE MULTIFACETED EXPRESSION OF IMPERIALISM IN CYPRUS

- At the crossroads of three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe) Cyprus has suffered since time immemorial from multiple foreign invaders, settlers and occupiers. It was conquered by Hittites, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Franks and Venetians and the Ottomans. From 1878 until 1960, it was put under British colonial rule.
- The imperialist powers of the 20th century USA, Britain and NATO have sought the transformation of Cyprus into an “unsinkable aircraft carrier” in the Mediterranean (presence of British military bases since 1960, Turkish occupation since 1974) as part of their plans for the “New Middle East”.
- The fostering of the ethnic conflict in Cyprus between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots by the imperialist powers and their local associates paved the way for the Turkish military intervention in 1974.
- For the last 42 years, 37% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus remains under the illegal military occupation of Turkey.

To the expense of the freedom of all its people, of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Republic of Cyprus has been used by imperialist forces as another tool in effecting the complete strategic rearrangement of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East region; through the redrawing of borders, foreign interventions in the internal affairs of states, the overthrow of “non-friendly” governments and the fostering of religious and ethnic conflicts.



From British Colonialism to Independence WITH HEGEMONIC FOREIGN GUARANTEES AND AN ETHNICALLY DIVISIVE CONSTITUTION

The tyranny of the British colonials completed the repression exercised upon the working class by the local bourgeois class. The Communist Party of Cyprus was founded in 1926 having among its primary aims the struggle against exploitation and the liberation from British colonialism through a broad united front of anti-colonial forces of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. In 1941 AKEL –the successor of CPC - was founded to lead the mass political struggle for freedom.



The anti-colonial struggle gradually grew with the increase in popular involvement. During those years Cypriots fought for their independence. Nonetheless at the same time they fought by the side of the Spanish people in defence of democracy and joined the fight of humanity against Hitler's fascism, realising that these struggles were at the same time part of their struggle for the right of self-determination.

The ten years that followed, 1945-1955, were years of an intense and hard anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggle which demanded the right to self-determination and further political freedoms for our people. At the same time these were years of intense class struggle.

In 1955 the anti-colonial struggle took the form of armed struggle. AKEL was in favour of mass political struggle. Despite the heroic self-sacrifice of many young Cypriots, the armed struggle led the Cyprus problem to dangerous deadlocks; exploited by the British imperialism which aimed at a solution serving its own interests.

Under the threat of partition or even the complete occupation

of Cyprus by Turkey, the British imposed the Zurich-London agreements. Agreements that left on the island foreign troops, British military bases and imposed a constitution that undermined the normal co-existence of the two communities. The ethnically divisive nature of the Constitution facilitated the fostering of ethnic conflict in Cyprus to the benefit of foreign interests. The agreements were sealed with the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee that put the Republic of Cyprus under the hegemonic control of three guarantor powers, namely Britain, Turkey and Greece.

Ankara's expansionist aims and NATO's plans to convert Cyprus into an unsinkable aircraft carrier of the Alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean, threatened the very existence of the young independent Republic of Cyprus.

Within the country, significant forces both within the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities did not believe in independence. They saw it as a transitional stage, the ones towards ENOSIS (union with Greece), the others towards TAXIM (partition). Following the intercommunal conflict of December 1963, Cyprus engaged in a struggle of survival.

The years 1964 - 1974 constituted a decade of struggle for the defence of the independence and unity of the Republic of Cyprus. Foreign decision-making centres aimed at undermining Cyprus from within. Willing collaborators in these plans were the Athens' junta and the local extreme right-wing. Conspiracies took place for the violent overthrow of Makarios and the fascist illegal organisation EOKA B waged an orgy of terrorism through the assassination of democratic citizens, abductions, bomb attacks on police stations etc.



Turkish Invasion in 1974 and the Illegal Occupation of Cyprus until Today

Unfortunately, when under the orders of the Greek junta and the transatlantic decision-making centres the treacherous tanks moved, on 15 July 1974, the heroic resistance of the democratic forces was not in a position to stop them.

The fascist coup was followed by the Turkish invasion on 20 July 1974. Despite Turkey's allegations that it was carrying out an intervention under the Treaty of Guarantee, its intervention was an illegal act of aggression. Until today, 40,000 Turkish troops occupy 37% of the territory of Cyprus and turned 170,000 that is 1/3 of the population into refugees. Around 40,000 Turkish Cypriots were forced by Turkey to move to the northern part of the island, thus completing the segregation. Fundamental freedoms and human rights are being violated. An attempt is carried out to alter the demographic structure of the island by the mass settling of the occupied areas by Turkish citizens. It is now estimated that their number exceeds by far the number of Turkish Cypriots in the occupied areas. Simultaneously, the illegal usurpation of Greek Cypriots' properties in the occupied areas makes the property issue one of the burning and most perplexed problems of any solution sought.

The 1963-64 inter-communal conflict and the 1974 Turkish invasion left behind about 2000 missing Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. In the past few years a breakthrough was achieved by the Committee on Missing Persons and the two communities are working together in collecting information on the fate of the missing persons and proceed with exhumations and DNA identification. This is gradually allowing the families to lay their beloved persons to rest and heal a big wound.



The Cyprus Peace Process

Since 1974, the UN has been trying to facilitate the solution of the Cyprus problem. Numerous UN Resolutions call for withdrawal of Turkish troops and settlers and for the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus as well as the respect of the inalienable rights of refugees to return to their homes and enjoy peacefully their properties. The Makarios – Denktash High Level Agreement of 1977 and the Kyprianou – Denktash High Level Agreement of 1979, the then leaders of the two communities, provide for the transformation of the Republic of Cyprus from a unitary state to a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality, as this is described by the Security Council resolutions, with two regions, each one to be administered by the respective community. The same Agreements provide for the demilitarisation of the Republic of Cyprus and the respect of fundamental freedoms and human rights of all Cypriots. Nevertheless, these Agreements have never been implemented because of Turkey's intransigence and insistence on a solution allowing it to perpetuate its presence and interests on the island.



The Current State of Play

The last peace process has gone through three main distinctive phases, namely the period when Demetris Christofias was in the leadership of the Greek Cypriot community, the period following the 2013 election of the right-wing President Nicos Anastasiades which culminated in the failed Crans Montana Conference on Cyprus in July 2017 and its aftermath.

During AKEL's governance with Demetris Christofias (2008-2013)

As a result of the policies and initiatives undertaken by the ex-President of the Republic of Cyprus com. Demetris Christofias, the beginning of substantive negotiations, between the leaders of the two communities of Cyprus on the 3rd of September 2008, was made possible. The negotiations between Demetris Christofias and the ex-Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat lasted for almost 1 and a half year. During this period significant convergences were achieved on certain chapters like Governance and Power Sharing, Economy and EU Affairs. Nevertheless, significant disagreements remained on serious aspects, especially in the Chapters that are related to the Security and Guarantees, the Territorial, the settlers and the Properties issues.

A very negative development occurred in April 2010 with the election of the extreme-right wing and nationalist politician Dervish Eroglu in the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community. His election created even more obstacles in the efforts for finding a solution in the Cyprus Problem as his positions were in favour of a two states solution or partition. Moreover, he renounced the convergences.



Following the election of right-wing Nicos Anastasiades in 2013

The change to the Presidency of Cyprus in February 2013, was not followed by a quick and smooth resumption of the negotiations. Anastasiades insistence to restart the negotiations from scratch and not from the point of previous convergences proved to be very problematic. His position, without excluding Eroglu's blame, constituted another complicating factor. Eventually, twelve months were wasted unnecessarily in trying to draft a new joint declaration, issued at last in February 2014, to replace the 2008 Christofias-Talat joint statements, despite the fact that they had provided a more in-depth and positive framework.

In the autumn of 2014 the resumption of the negotiations was hijacked by Turkey's issuing of a NAVTEX through which it unlawfully 'designated' a large area within the south part of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Republic of Cyprus, almost adjacent to the Republic of Cyprus' territorial sea. This amounted to a flagrant violation of International Law and of the sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus, justifying the suspension of the negotiations from the Greek Cypriot community.

The termination of Turkey's NAVTEX and the assumption by Mustafa Akinci of the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot

community in April 2015, a renowned pro-solutionist and progressive Turkish Cypriot politician, revived the prospects for revival of the peace process. His commitment in restarting negotiations from where they had been left by Christofias-Talat, infused hope regarding the fate of the direct talks which restarted. Nevertheless, for more than a year the process went through phases of regression. From June 2016 onwards, the negotiations intensified. Notwithstanding that major problems remained, particularly on the issues of property and territory, the two leaders committed themselves to the process.

In November 2016, in light of the slow pace of progress on pending core issues, the Turkish Cypriot side abandoned its long-standing denial to discuss the territorial issue with the chapter on security in a final phase and given that a conclusion on all the other chapters was reached. Akinci agreed to discuss the territorial issue without a previous solution of the other chapters, something that was done in Mont Peleran, Switzerland. However, at the moment when the percentage of land that would remain under Turkish Cypriot administration came within range of a convergence, President Anastasiades broke off the effort for unconvincing reasons. Since then, a steady regression had begun inevitably linked to the presidential elections of 2018. A second round of talks at Mont Peleran also failed and under the threat of a final collapse, the convening of a Conference on Cyprus in Geneva was agreed. AKEL had a different view with regards the possibility of a successful outcome, but also on the composition of the Conference itself. Nonetheless, given that this is what was decided by both leaders and the UN, AKEL again supported the effort, but always on the precondition of the safeguarding of the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus. Being unprepared with regards to its format and content, the first phase of the Geneva Conference failed as well. In order to save the peace process from a final collapse, a third Mont Peleran meeting was agreed, this time among technocrats.

In a following effort to avoid the collapse of the peace process, in early June the two leaders and the UN Secretary-General decided to hold a second round of direct talks in the context of the Conference of Cyprus towards the end of the same month. In his report towards the UN Security Council of 28 September 2017, two months after the collapse of the Conference, the UN Secretary-General observed that the sides failed to walk the last mile, wasting a historic opportunity regarding the solution of the Cyprus problem. In the same report, he recalls the submission of his Framework at Crans Montana within which he describes the main pending issues. Effectively, he calls upon the two communities to show the political will for the resumption of the negotiations from where they were left at Crans Montana (convergences, Guterres Framework, mechanism for the implementation of the solution) following the same method of simultaneous negotiation but in different "tables" and formats of the main remaining internal and external aspects. AKEL considers this as the only way forward; all the more, for the first time at Crans Montana the UN, the EU, Britain and Greece have expressly joined our position for the termination of the Treaty of Guarantee and of any alleged unilateral right of intervention with the comprehensive solution. Ultimately, the UN Secretary-General does not seem to adopt the same reasoning as President Anastasiades for the negative outcome nor for the respective responsibilities regarding its failure.



After the failure of Crans Montana in 2017

Since 2017 the Cyprus problem has entered a dangerous period of unproductive passive inaction with regards to the negotiations and of multiple illegal Turkish activities. During this period we witnessed President Anastasiades's regressions, the promotion of "new ideas" that negated previous key convergences recorded and the protracted involvement of the two leaders in a blame-game, resulting in the UN Secretary General not being convinced of the prospect of a meaningful resumption of negotiations.

Following the failure of the Crans Montana Conference on Cyprus and having been acquitted of any responsibilities by the international community and the UN Secretary General himself, Turkey has become more aggressive against the Republic of Cyprus. It has been strengthening its expansionist ambitions against the sovereignty and sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus. The carrying out of seismic surveys and drilling within the territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus constitutes a flagrant violation of the UN Law of the Sea. At the same time, the escalating machinations for the colonisation of the enclosed area of Famagusta adversely affect the status of the area, they violate the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, in particular Resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992) and undermine the prospects for a comprehensive solution. The imposition of the partitionist Ersin Tatar to the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community in October 2020 has been serving the Turkish machinations against the Republic of Cyprus.

A grave development has been the official submission by Turkey and Tatar, during the unofficial meeting of Geneva in April 2021, of their unacceptable proposal for a two states' solution. A proposal which is outside the UN parameters and violates core principles of international law. Very timely, AKEL had submitted a proposal to the President of the Republic regarding what he should do to address the dangerous regression and create the preconditions for a meaningful resumption of the negotiations with the prospect of a successful outcome.

AKEL stresses that, in order to fight against the Turkish illegal activities and raise the prospect for a comprehensive solution, there is no other alternative than the resumption of the negotiations under the auspices of the UN, and more specifically from where they had stopped at the Crans Montana talks; on the basis of the 2014 Joint Declaration, the Guterres Framework of 30th June 2017 and the acquis of the convergences that had been recorded as the UN Secretary General has been calling for in his Reports since September 2017. At the same time, AKEL warns that in the absence of tangible progress within the aforementioned context, dangerous 'new ideas' seeking to accommodate the unacceptable Turkish positions will start developing.

It is our firm belief that unless the Cyprus problem is resolved, none of the sides directly involved, including Turkey, nor the actors implicitly concerned, will be relieved from the deficits of the current status quo (that is non-static) and its projected deterioration. On this critical juncture, AKEL expects Turkey and Tatar to reconsider the benefits stemming from a comprehensive solution and demands the immediate termination of any provocative and illegal activities which embed the permanent division of our country. Simultaneously, it reminds the international community of the pressing need to resume the negotiations in the agreed framework and from where they had remained if the prospect of the solution is to be kept alive.



Appeal for Solidarity

The solidarity of our friends, in view of the next critical period, is necessary more than ever before in supporting with all the political means possible our struggle for the reunification of our country and our people.

The AKEL Position in Brief

- ▶ AKEL is struggling for a peaceful solution of the Cyprus problem within the framework of the United Nations through substantive bicomunal talks.
- ▶ It is to the benefit of our people, of our country, of Turkey, of the region and the international community as a whole to reach a comprehensive solution as soon as possible.
- ▶ Taking into account the negative experience of the past, the procedure should remain of Cypriot ownership.
- ▶ A decent compromise shall be in accordance with the UN Charter, international law principles and the High- Level Agreements of 1977 and 1979. It must comply with the agreed framework for a bicomunal, bizonal, federal state with a single sovereignty, a single international personality and a single citizenship, as it is prescribed in numerous UN Security Council Resolutions.
- ▶ The comprehensive solution shall include: the withdrawal of Turkish occupation forces and settlers, the restoration of the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus, the respect of the independence of Cyprus, the respect and restoration of the human rights and freedoms of all Cypriots, including the right of all refugees to return to their homes and properties.
- ▶ AKEL supports the immediate resumption of the negotiations within the agreed framework and from where they had remained in 2017 with full respect to the acquis of prior convergences, including those on political equality.
- ▶ Under a prudent management, the discovery of natural gas within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus can prove supportive for the solution. Considering that stability is essential for the unhindered exploitation of the natural wealth, the solution of the Cyprus problem can maximize the respective benefits both for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, as well as for Turkey.
- ▶ The rapprochement between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots constitutes an indispensable precondition both for finding a solution and for its viability, and the use of the pandemic as a pretext for restricting their contact should cease.



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