

Stagnation: Ottoman rule

Because the Lusignans had never made any attempt to bridge the gap between ruler and ruled, they remained an unassimilated upper crust, all trace of which was swept away by the Turkish conquest. By 1573 most of the monasteries and Latin churches had been destroyed, and most surviving **Catholics** had departed or converted to Islam; the tiny “Latin” minority in today’s Cyprus is all that survives from this era. Other ancestors of the present **Turkish population** date from the year of the conquest, when Ottoman soldiers and their families formed the nucleus, some twenty thousand strong, of initial settlement, later supplemented by civilians from Anatolia (see box, p.380). Their relations with the native Greek population were, if not always close, usually cordial.

The Greek Orthodox peasantry, perhaps surprisingly in the light of later events, actually **welcomed** the Ottomans at first; both shared a hatred of the Franks, whose feudal system was abolished and lands distributed to the freed serfs. The Greeks also appreciated Ottoman **recognition of their Church**: not only were certain Catholic ecclesiastical properties made over to Orthodoxy, but in 1660 the archbishop was officially acknowledged as the head of the Greek community in accord with prevailing Ottoman administrative practice, with the right of direct petition to the sultan. This was followed in 1754 by the revival of the role of **ethnarch**, with comprehensive civil powers, and in 1779 by the stipulation for a **dragoman**, a Greek appointed by the ethnarch to liaise with the island’s Turkish governor. The most powerful and famous dragoman was **Hadjiyeorgakis Kornesios** (see p.252).

None of this, however, was done in a spirit of disinterested religious tolerance; the Ottomans used the ecclesiastical apparatus principally to collect onerous **taxes**, and the clerics, who eventually all but ran the island together with the dragoman, made themselves every bit as unpopular as the Muslim governors. In fairness, the clergy often attempted to protect their flock from the more rapacious exactions of the various governors, who – minimally salaried and having paid huge bribes to secure their short-term appointments – were expected to recoup their expenses with exactions from the populace. People unable to meet assessments forfeited **land** in lieu of payment, the original source of the Orthodox Church’s still-extensive real-estate holdings.

If the Greeks had hoped for a definitive improvement in their lot with the end of Frankish rule, they were thoroughly disillusioned, as Cyprus became one of the **worst-governed and neglected** Ottoman provinces. Almost all tax revenues went to Istanbul, with next to nothing spent to abate the drought, plagues and locusts which lashed the island, or on other local improvements; Turkish medieval monuments are rare on Cyprus, reflecting the island’s low prestige. Between 1571 and the late 1700s the population dropped sharply, with many Greeks **emigrating** to Anatolia or the Balkans despite administrative reshuffles aimed at staunching the outflow.

These conditions ensured that the three Ottoman centuries were punctuated by regular **rebellions**, which often united Muslim and Christian peasantry against their overlords. The first occurred in 1680; in 1764 the excesses of the worst governor, **Çil Osman**, precipitated a longer and bloodier revolt in which he was killed, the Turkish commander of Kyrenia mutinied, and the Greek bishops appealed to Istanbul for the restoration of order. With the rise of Balkan nationalism later that century, the *Filiki Eteria* (Friendly Society), the Greek revolutionary fifth column, was active on Cyprus after 1810. To forestall any echo of the

Who are the Turkish Cypriots?

The number of **Muslims** on Cyprus, even during the most vigorous periods of Ottoman rule, never exceeded about one-third of the population, and had already declined to about one-quarter when the British arrived in 1878. The word “Muslim” is used deliberately, since religious affiliation, not race or ethnicity, was the determining civic factor in the Ottoman empire; the present-day Turkish Cypriots are in fact descended from various sources.

At the time of the 1571 conquest, Ottoman **civil servants** arrived with their families, whose descendants tend to preserve their aristocratic consciousness to this day. Some twenty thousand **janissaries**, by definition of Anatolian or Balkan Christian origins and adherents of the Bektashi dervish order, took as wives the widows of the defeated Venetians, as well as a number of Orthodox Christian virgins. Roughly another ten thousand civilian transportees from Anatolia consisted of skilled, town-dwelling craftsmen, landless farmers, **Turkmen** nomads brought over for the sake of their reed- and textile-weaving skills, **Alevi** mountaineers, and various prison convicts transported to a more comfortable exile on Cyprus. **Africans** from Sudan also arrived, mostly working as porters in and around Larnaca and Limassol, and obliged by local colour consciousness to marry less desirable, “low-class” women. Muslim **Gypsies** tagged along from Anatolia, and while allowed to settle, they were (and are) discriminated against as much as anywhere else in the Balkans – despite taking the Turkish-Cypriot side in the battles of recent decades.

The so-called **Linovamvákí** (Cotton-Linen) sect, which practised Islam outwardly but maintained Christian beliefs (including baptism) in private, arose mainly among Venetian civilians (names like Mehmet Valentino occur in old archives); curiously, they spoke Greek in preference to Turkish, and many villages such as *Ágios Ioánnis*, *Monágrí*, *Louroujína* (today *Akincılar* in the North), *Vrécha* and most of the *Tillyría* region were once almost exclusively inhabited by Linovamvákí. After 1878, evangelization of this group by both Muslim and Christian clerics, and the resulting assimilative marriages, resulted in a hitherto unknown polarization in island society; in the North today, many of the more fanatical nationalists are in fact of Linovamvákí background, eager to deny a practice – propitiation of all local deities without prejudice – which was once common in the Ottoman empire.

A more recent development is proselytization by the **Baháí** faith, with approximately five hundred adherents in the North. It was founded by the adoptive son of the holy man Mirza Ali Mohammed (Al-Bab), hanged as a troublemaker by the Iranian shah in 1850. Al-Bab’s biological son, Süphi Ezel, was exiled first to Edirne, then to Famagusta, and while the **Ezeli** rite is no longer a vital religion in the North, his tomb remains a focus of pilgrimage for Iranian believers.

There are also a number of **“Palestinian”** – or rather part-Palestinian – northerners, descendants of Turkish-Cypriot women who, during the 1930s Depression, amid dire conditions on the island, were married off to Arab Muslims in Palestine; after its partition in 1948, many returned with their husbands and families.

Given these motley, often “heretical” origins of the Turkish Cypriots (the janissaries and Alevi being particularly tolerant of alcohol consumption), it’s hardly surprising that observance of orthodox Islam on Cyprus has always been lax – despite recent Saudi agitation – and that fervent Turkish nationalism had to be whipped up by outsiders after World War II.

mainland Greek rebellion, Governor **Küçük Mehmet** got permission from the sultan in 1821 to execute the unusually popular **Archbishop Kyprianos**, his three bishops and hundreds of leading Greek Orthodox islanders in Nicosia, not so coincidentally confiscating their considerable property and inaugurating another spell of unrest on the island, which ended in the revolt of 1833.

Such incidents were not repeated after European powers established more trading posts and watchful consulates at Larnaca, and the Church's power **waned slightly** with the suspension of its right to collect taxes and the emergence of an educated, westernized class of Greek Cypriot. As the nineteenth century wore on, **Britain** found itself repeatedly guaranteeing the Ottoman empire's territorial integrity in the path of Russian expansionism; in 1878, this relationship was formalized by the **Anglo-Turkish Convention**, whereby the Ottomans ceded occupation and administrative rights of Cyprus – though technically not sovereignty – to Britain in return for having halted the Russian advance outside Bstanbul during the 1877–78 Russo-Turkish war, and for a continued undertaking to help defend what was left of Turkish domains. Curiously, Britain's retention of Cyprus was **linked** to Russia's occupation of Ardahan, Kars and Batumi, three strongpoints on Turkey's Caucasian frontier; Kars and Ardahan were returned to republican Turkey in 1921, but in the NATO era Turkey's and Britain's continued alliance against the Russian threat still served as ostensible justification for the latter's occupation of Cyprus.

British rule

British forces landed peacefully at Larnaca in July 1878, assuming control of the island without incident; ironically, the British acquisition of Egypt and the Suez Canal in 1882 made Cyprus of secondary importance as a **military base**, with civilian high commissioners soon replacing military ones. The Greek Orthodox population, appreciating Britain's cession of the Ionian islands to Greece in 1864, hoped for the same largesse here, and the Bishop of Kition's greeting speech to the landing party alluded directly to this. Free of the threat of Ottoman repression, demands for **énosis** (union) with Greece were reiterated regularly by Greek Cypriots until 1960 – and beyond. By contrast, from the very outset of the colonial period Turkish Cypriots expressed their satisfaction with the status quo and horror at the prospect of being Greek citizens.

What the Cypriots got instead, aside from separate Greek- and Turkish-language education, was a modicum of **better government** – reforestation, an end to banditry and extralegal extortion, an English legal system, water supplies, roads and quelling of disease and locusts – combined with a continuance of **crushing taxes**, which precluded any striking economic growth. An obscure clause of the Anglo-Turkish Convention mandated that the excess of tax revenues (appreciable) over local expenditures (almost nil) during the last five years of Ottoman rule was theoretically to be paid to the sultan's government, a rule which pressured colonial administrators to keep programmes modest so as to have some sum to forward – or to squeeze the Cypriots for more taxes. The practice was widely condemned by Cypriophiles and Turkophobes in England, including Gladstone and Churchill, but amazingly continued until 1927. Worse still, the monies went not to İstanbul, but to bondholders of an 1855 loan to Turkey on which the Ottoman regime had defaulted. So while Cyprus regained its former population level, the British-promised prosperity never appeared, the islanders in effect being required to **service an Ottoman debt**. The only apparatus of self-government was a rudimentary **legislative council**, numerically weighted towards colonial civil servants and with very limited powers.

Following Ottoman Turkey's 1914 entry into World War I as one of the Central Powers, Britain declared most provisions of the Anglo-Turkish Convention void, and formally **annexed** Cyprus. The next year she secretly offered it to Greece as an inducement to join the war on the Allied side, but Greece, then ruled by pro-German King Constantine I, declined, to the Greek Cypriots' infinite later regret. In the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, republican Turkey renounced all claims to Cyprus, but the island did not officially become a colony until 1925, by which time calls for *énosis* were again being heard. These increased in stridency, leading in **1931** to the first serious **civil disturbances**: the Greek-Cypriot members of the legislative council resigned, and rioters burned down the Government House, a rambling bungalow diverted from use in Ceylon. The Cypriots' anger was not only sparked by the *énosis* issue, but also from disappointment at the modest level of material progress under British rule, especially the woebegone state of agriculture.

Advent of the Left

The British **response** to the mini-rebellion was predictably harsh: reparations levies for damages, bans on publications and flying the Greek flag, proscriptions of existing political parties (especially the KKK or Communists, who had organized strikes in 1929 at the Tróodhos asbestos mines), and imprisonment or deportation of activists – including two bishops. The legislative council was abolished, and Cyprus came under the nearest thing to martial law; only the **PEO** or Pancyprian Federation of Labour, though driven underground until 1936, remained as a pole of opposition to the colonial regime, and a haven for left-wing Turkish and Greek Cypriot alike. **AKEL**, the new **communist party**, grew out of it in 1941, and has remained an important faction in the Greek-Cypriot community to this day. Municipal elections were finally held in 1943, and served as a barometer of public sentiment through the balance of the colonial period; the British could not very well profess to be fighting fascism while simultaneously withholding basic political freedoms.

During **World War II**, Cyprus belied its supposed strategic value by escaping much involvement other than as an important supply depot and staging post. The island suffered just a few stray Italian raids from Rhodes, and German ones from Crete; after the German difficulties on Crete, Hitler had forbidden another paratroop action to seize Cyprus. About 28,000 Cypriots, both Greek and Turkish (plus hundreds of Cypriot donkeys), fought as volunteers with British forces in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and the Greeks at least expected some political reward for this at the war's end.

The extent of this was the 1947 offer by Governor Lord Winster of a **limited constitution** of self-rule, similar to that tendered in other colonies at the time. It was summarily rejected by the *enosist* elements, principally the Orthodox Church, who proclaimed that anything less than *énosis* or at least provision for its eventual implementation was unacceptable – a stance which guaranteed later bloodshed. AKEL was lukewarm on the idea; they were busy mounting the inconclusive but heroic 1947–48 **strike** in the American-run copper mines of Soléa district. The Americans had at least one other toehold on the island: an electronic listening post at Karavás (now Alsancak) on the north coast near Kyrenia, opened in 1949 to monitor all radio broadcasts from behind the Iron Curtain, and the first of several local facilities designed to keep tabs on Soviet doings in the incipient Cold War.

The postwar years

By 1950, demands for *énosis* had returned to the fore; in a **referendum** campaign organized by newly elected Archbishop and Ethnarch **Makarios III**, results showed 96 percent support for *énosis* among Greek Cypriots. They seemed to ignore the fact that Greece, dominated by far-right-wing governments and still a stretcher case after the rigours of German occupation and a civil war, was a poor candidate as a partner for association; yet so great was the groundswell for union that even the PEO and AKEL subscribed to it after 1950, though they could both expect a fairly unpleasant fate in a rightist “Greater Greece”. In general outsiders have had trouble understanding the enormous emotional and historical appeal of *énosis*, whose advocates readily admitted that Cypriot living standards would drop sharply once the island was out of the sterling zone and yoked to chaotic, impoverished Greece.

Soon the theoretical possibility of *énosis* dawned on the island’s **Turkish minority** – some eighteen percent of the population – who began agitation in opposition, advocating either the status quo or some sort of affiliation with Turkey rather than becoming a truly insignificant minority in a greater Greece. As the Turkish Cypriots were scattered almost uniformly throughout the island, the option of a separate Turkish-Cypriot province or canton was not available without painful population transfers.

Many Greek Cypriots subsequently accused the British (and to a lesser extent the Americans) of **stirring up** Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots against them, and while there is ample truth to this – divide-and-rule was very much a colonial strategy – mainland Turkey itself would probably have eventually become involved without cues from Britain, and the Turkish Cypriots were certainly not quiescent. Greek Cypriots saw the situation as a non-colonial problem of the island’s wishing to transfer its allegiance to the “mother country”; Britain, in their view, transformed matters into a general Greco-Turkish dispute under the guise of “harmony in the southeast flank of NATO”, ensuring that Turkey would forcefully block any move towards *énosis*.

After Egyptian independence in 1954, **British Mid-East Military HQ** was moved to Cyprus over a period of twenty months, making self-determination far less likely, and the British position increasingly inflexible – thanks to such intemperate Tory personalities as Anthony Eden, and increasing support for this policy by the Americans. In July of that year, the minister of state for the colonies declared that “certain Commonwealth territories, owing to their particular circumstances, can never expect to be fully independent” – and went on to express fears of a pro-Soviet AKEL dominating an independent Cyprus. To Greek Cypriots this utterance seemed ludicrous in the light of independence being granted to far less developed parts of Asia and Africa. That “never” closed off all avenues of communication with more moderate Greek Cypriots, and came back to repeatedly haunt the British over the next five years.

In **Greece** the government encouraged a shrill, anti-British media barrage in support of *énosis*, available to any radio set on Cyprus. For the first time Greece also tried to internationalize the Cyprus issue at the **UN**, where it failed to get a full hearing, though Turkey bared its teeth in preliminary discussions, a promise of trouble in the future. Only the Greek ambassador to London astutely saw that the mainland Turks were now an interested party and would have to be included, or at least mollified, in any solution.

The EOKA rebellion, TMT resistance

Together with **General George Grivas** (see box, p.254), alias “Dhiyenis” after the hero of a Byzantine epic, Archbishop Makarios in 1954 secretly founded **EOKA**, *Ethnikí Orgánosis Kypríon Agonistón* or “National Organization of Cypriot Fighters”, as an IRA-type movement to throw off British rule. Late that year several clandestine shipments of arms and explosives were transferred from Rhodes to the Páfos coast, though the archbishop initially shrank back from advocating lethal force against persons, restricting Grivas to sabotage of property. EOKA’s campaign of violence on Cyprus began spectacularly on April 1, 1955 with the destruction of the Government radio transmitter, among other targets.

Overseas, a hastily scheduled **trilateral conference** in July 1955, convening representatives of Greece, Turkey and Britain, flopped miserably; Makarios remarked that Greece’s attendance had merely legitimized Turkish involvement in the Cyprus issue. Two months later, massive, Turkish-government-inspired **rioting** in İstanbul caused staggering loss to Greek property and effectively dashed any hope of a reasonable future for the Orthodox community there.

Newly appointed **High Commissioner John Harding**, a former field marshal, pursued a hard line against EOKA; ongoing negotiations with Makarios, who distanced himself at least publicly from the armed struggle, were approaching a breakthrough when Grivas set off more strategically timed bombs. Talks were broken off and the archbishop and two associates **deported** in March 1956 to comfortable house arrest in the Seychelles. Deprived of its ablest spokesman, EOKA now graduated to murderous **attacks** on Greek Cypriots who disagreed with them, as well as on British soldiers and civilians. The island terrain was ideal for guerrilla insurgency; despite searches, internments, collective punishments for aiding EOKA and other now-familiar curtailments of civil liberties in such emergencies, the uprising couldn’t be quelled. An estimated 1200 guerrillas, based primarily in the Tróódhos, tied up 25,000 regular British Army troops and 4500 special constables. The latter were overwhelmingly composed of Turkish-Cypriot auxiliaries – who often **tortured** captured EOKA suspects under the supervision of British officers, an assigned task which perceptibly increased intercommunal tensions. These auxiliaries were attracted by pay rates of £30 a month, then a small fortune on the island; no Greek Cypriot could expect to last long in such a post without being done away with as a traitor by EOKA. Spring and summer of 1956 also saw the **hangings** of nine convicted EOKA men, touching off violent protests in Greece and plunging British-Greek relations to an all-time low. When Harding issued an ultimatum for the surrender of insurrectionist weapons, EOKA responded contemptuously by parading a riderless donkey through downtown Nicosia, emblazoned with banners reading (in Greek and English) “I surrender” (see p.407 for the role of the donkey in Cypriot society).

International pressure in 1957 – and Britain’s realization that no other Greek-Cypriot negotiating partner existed – secured Makarios’s release, just after Greece finally managed to get Cyprus on the UN agenda, resulting in a resolution accepting independence “in principle”. Harding was replaced with more conciliatory civilian **Governor Hugh Foot**, and a constitutional commissioner, Lord Radcliffe, was dispatched to make more generous proposals for limited self-government than those of 1947. These were again rejected by the Greek Cypriots, because they didn’t envision *énosis*, and by the Turkish Cypriots – represented by the **Turkish National Party**, headed by future vice-president **Fazıl Küçük** – since it didn’t specifically exclude that possibility.

After isolated intercommunal incidents, the **TMT** or *Türk Mukavemet Teskilati* (Turkish Resistance Organization) was founded early in **1958** to counter EOKA by working for *taksim* (partition) of the island between Greece and Turkey. But TMT's cell structure was modelled on EOKA, and it also duplicated EOKA's rabid **anti-communism**, killing various left-wing Turkish personalities and pressurizing Turkish Cypriots to leave PEO and AKEL, the last unsegregated institutions on the island. TMT also organized a boycott of Greek-Cypriot products and shops, just as EOKA was presiding over a Greek-Cypriot boycott of British goods.

Intercommunal clashes – and resumed rebellion

A June 1958 bomb explosion outside the Turkish press office in Nicosia – later shown to have been planted by TMT provocateurs – set off the first serious **inter-communal clashes** on the island. In Nicosia, Turkish gangs expelled Greeks from some mixed neighbourhoods, and induced some Turks to abandon villages in the south of the island in favour of the north – a forerunner of 1974 events. Shortly after, in what became known as the **Gönyeli incident**, seven EOKA suspects were released from British custody to walk home through a Turkish-Cypriot area, where they were duly stabbed to death. EOKA retaliated by targeting Turkish-Cypriot policemen, and stepping up assaults on the British after a year's lull. The resumed war of attrition between EOKA and British forces became increasingly dirty and no-holds-barred, with the latter nursing a racial loathing for their adversaries; the **death toll** for the whole insurrection climbed to nearly six hundred. Of these almost half were left-wing or pro-British Greek Cypriots killed by EOKA, while eventually 346 UK squaddies were interred in a special military cemetery, today found in the buffer zone. **Truces** were declared in late summer by both TMT and EOKA, with many displaced Cypriots returning to their homes in mixed areas. The EOKA truce did not, however, extend to AKEL members, who now favoured independence again – and continued to suffer fatal consequences.

One final Greece-sponsored UN resolution for Cypriot “self-determination” (by now code for *énosis*) in 1958 fell short of the required two-thirds majority in the General Assembly, so Makarios began to accept the wisdom of independence, especially as both the British, particularly Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, and the Turkish Cypriots were threatening to revive the option of partition and massive population movements. The bloody July 1958 anti-royalist coup in Iraq, hitherto one of Britain's staunchest Middle East allies, and the subsequent loss of unrestricted use of its two airfields, had also reinforced British and American resolve not to let Cyprus' valuable military facilities fall into “unreliable” hands.

Throughout the later 1950s, EOKA, Greece and most Greek Cypriots had failed to take seriously the **mainland Turkish position**: that Turkey would act to prevent strategically vital Cyprus becoming Greek territory, as Crete had after a fifteen-year period of supposed independence at the start of the century. Less genuine, perhaps, was Turkey's new-found concern for its “brothers” on the island; programmes broadcast regularly over Radio Ankara agitated feelings in its communal audience just as mainland Greek programmes did in theirs. The British, now faced with hostility from Turkish Cypriots as well as from the Greeks, and contemplating the soaring costs of containing the rebellion, desperately sought a way out. Various proposals were briefly mooted by the UK and the US, including NATO administering Cyprus, a joint Greek-Turkish-British tridominium over the entire island, or an “orderly” partition into mainland-Greek- and Turkish-administered cantonments, all with the express intent of preventing any military use of the island by the Communist bloc.

The granting of independence

In February 1959, the foreign ministers of Greece and Turkey met in **Zurich** to hammer out some compromise settlement, with a supplementary meeting including the British and Cypriots in **London** a few days later. The participants agreed on the establishment of an independent Cypriot republic, its **constitution** to be prepared by an impartial Swiss expert. Of its 199 clauses, 48 were unalterable, with *énosis* or *taksim* expressly forbidden. The two ethnic communities were essentially to be co-founders, running the republic on a 70:30 Greek:Turk **proportional basis** that slightly favoured the Turkish minority. A single fifty-seat House of Representatives – with fifteen seats reserved for the Turks, two separate communal chambers funded partly by Greece and Turkey, and a Greek-Cypriot president plus a Turkish-Cypriot vice-president elected by their respective communities was also envisioned. The high court would be headed by a tie-breaking foreign justice. After considerable hesitation and misgivings – and, allegedly, blackmail by the British secret services with compromising material of a sexual nature – Makarios assented to the constitution.

The meetings also produced three interrelated **treaties**, incorporated as articles of the constitution. Britain, Turkey and Greece simultaneously entered into a **Treaty of Guarantee**, by which they acted as guarantors to safeguard Cypriot independence. A **Treaty of Establishment** stipulated the existence of two main British military bases, their extent to be determined, and other training areas. The **Treaty of Alliance** provided for the stationing of Greek and Turkish military forces, at Yerólakkos (Alaykoy) and Gönyeli respectively, and the training of a Cypriot army, presumably as an arm of NATO; this provision was roundly denounced by AKEL, and indeed in the long run this treaty was to prove the most destabilizing element of the package.

Makarios, who had been in Greece since 1957, was finally permitted to **return to Cyprus**, where an amnesty was declared for most EOKA offenders. Grivas and the more hard-line enosisists, excoriating Makarios for his supposed betrayal of the cause, flew off to self-imposed exile in Greece, while certain supporters

Dr Fazil Küçük (1906–1984)

The first official leader of the **Turkish-Cypriot community**, Dr Fazil Küçük was a man of many parts – prodigious drinker, foul-mouthed frequenter of *meyhanes* with large groups of friends, and a journalist, in addition to being a politician and medico. He founded the still-existing *Halkın Sesi*, long the main Turkish-Cypriot newspaper, and often used it as a platform to indulge his bent for elaborate practical jokes. Although Küçük started his political career as an instrument of Turkish mainland policy on the island, he increasingly stood up for long-term Turkish-Cypriot interests, and was forced into early retirement in 1973 by TMT for not being malleable enough in the eyes of his “handlers”. When Ahmet Berberoğlu was similarly given a non-refusable offer, Rauf Denktaş was appointed unopposed as leader of the community. Unlike Denktaş, however, “Doktor” – as he was universally known – was also universally loved; about 100,000 people, virtually the entire Turkish-Cypriot population then in the North, attended his funeral in 1984. Küçük’s last oral “will” to his lawyer was for regular libations of Peristiany 31 brandy, “Doktor”’s favourite tippie, to be poured over his grave in Hamitköy (Mándhres). This was done just once, with such alarming results for the Turkish-army guard of honour posted there that the grave was cemented over to prevent recurrences.



▲ Fazil Küçük (speaking) and Archbishop Makarios (centre) at a ceremony to mark Cypriot Independence, 1960

stayed behind, punctuating most of 1959 with fulminations against the independence deal. They and others induced the bigotedly anti-Turkish-Cypriot **Mayor Themistoklis Dhervis of Nicosia** to form the first opposition party, the **Democratic Union**, which contested the presidential elections of December 1959 against the archbishop's **Popular Front**. Makarios won handily with two-thirds of the vote, while Fazil Küçük ran unopposed for vice-president.

Elections for the House of Representatives in February 1960 were poorly attended, with absenteeism and abstention rates of up to sixty percent in some districts reflecting popular disgust at the civic arrangements – and a poor omen for the future. The Popular Front took thirty seats, its coalition partners AKEL five, while Küçük's National Party got all fifteen Turkish seats. Polling for the powerful **communal chambers**, charged with overseeing education, religion, culture and consumer credit co-ops, showed a similar profile, though in the Greek chamber one seat each was reserved for the Armenian, Maronite and “Latin” communities.

Final independence, which had been set for no later than February 1960, was postponed until **August 16, 1960**, as the Cypriots and the British haggled over the exact size of the two sovereign bases. By coincidence, Venetian and British rule lasted exactly the same duration: 82 years.

The unitary republic: 1960–64

The Republic of Cyprus seemed doomed from the start, with EOKA and TMT **ideologues** appointed to key cabinet positions. Neither organization completely disbanded, but maintained shadowy existences, waiting for the right

moment to re-emerge. They and others made Makarios's life difficult: the enosisists considered that he'd sold them out, the Turks and Turkish Cypriots were convinced that he was biding his time for an opportunity to impose *énosis*, and many Communists felt he was too accommodating to the West.

On a **symbolic** level, communal iconography, street names and so on all continued referring to persons and events in the "mother" countries; the respective national flags and national days were celebrated by each community, and while there is a Cypriot flag, there never was a national anthem. Such institutionalized separatism was inimical to fostering a national consciousness. The **constitution**, an improbably intricate one for a population of just over half a million, proved unworkable in practice. Greek Cypriots chafed at it because it had been imposed from outside, while Turkish Cypriots took every opportunity to exploit numerous clauses benefiting them. It was, as several outside observers remarked, the only democracy where majority rule was explicitly denied by its founding charter. It did not seem to have occurred to the constitution's drafters that, by not providing for cross-communal voting (whereby, for example, presidential and vice-presidential candidates had to secure a majority of votes in *both* communities), Cyprus was condemned to rampant tribalism.

The **70:30 ratio**, applicable in all civil service institutions, could not be reached within the five months prescribed, and the **army**, to be set up on a 60:40 ratio with ethnic mix at all levels, never materialized, since the Turks insisted on segregated companies; instead Makarios eventually authorized the establishment of an all-Greek-Cypriot **National Guard**. Both the president and the vice-president had **veto power** over foreign affairs, defence and internal matters, exercised frequently by Küçük. Laws had to clear the House of Representatives by majority votes from **both communal factions**: thus eight of the fifteen Turkish MPs could defeat any bill. When agreement could not be reached in the first two years of the republic's life, colonial rules were often extended as **stopgaps**.

For much of 1962, Cyprus had no uniform income tax or customs excise laws, the Turks having blocked them in retaliation for Greek foot-dragging on implementation of separate municipalities for the five largest towns. Another concession to the Turkish Cypriots was the maintenance of **separate municipalities**, first set up in the 1950s, for each community in those towns – something the Greek Cypriots considered an incredibly wasteful and time-consuming duplication of services, as well as (correctly in light of later events) stalking horses for island-wide partition. Yet the Greeks did not hesitate to pass **revenue** laws through their own chamber when frustrated in the parliament, thus perpetuating the apartheid by providing services only to the Greek-Cypriot community and those Turks choosing to acknowledge its jurisdiction.

Among the hardline elements, the TMT struck first, against its own community: on April 23, 1962 gunmen murdered **Ahmet Gurkan** and **Ayhan Hikmet**, leaders of the only Turkish-Cypriot political party to oppose Küçük's National Party, promoting closer co-operation between two communities. It was a reprise of numerous such attacks in 1958, and, now as then, no action was taken against TMT or its backers; **Rauf Denктаş**, protégé of Küçük, even managed to get Emil Dirvana, Turkish ambassador to Nicosia and one of many to condemn the murders, recalled. There would be no other significant Turkish-Cypriot opposition group until the 1970s.

In late November 1963, Makarios proposed to Küçük **thirteen constitutional amendments** to make bicomunal public life possible. These included the abolition of both the presidential and vice-presidential right of veto, the introduction of simple majority rule in the legislature, the unification of the

municipalities and justice system, and an adjustment of communal ratios in civil service and the still-theoretical army. Apparently, this proposal had been drafted with the advice of the British high commissioner; Greece subsequently deemed the bundle incredibly tactless, even if such reforms were worth introducing gradually. Turkey was sent the suggestions and denounced them, threatening military action if they were introduced unilaterally, even before Küçük had finished reading them, leaving him little room to manoeuvre. These infamous proposals are claimed to be part of a secret Greek-Cypriot strategy known as the **Akritas Plan**, whereby political obstacles to *énosis* were to be eliminated incrementally and discretely – and Turkish-Cypriot objectors eliminated physically if necessary. It was, and remains, a Turkish codeword for enosis perfidy, and widely distributed printouts of the supposed plan have never been convincingly demonstrated to be a hoax.

Further intercommunal fighting

Reaction to the Turkish refusal was swift: on **December 21, 1963** shots were exchanged between a Greek-Cypriot police patrol and a car full of Turkish Cypriots – the precipitating factor, as so often in Cypriot violence, was prostitution – and within hours EOKA and TMT were at it again. EOKA struck at Turkish neighbourhoods in Larnaca, and also in the mixed Nicosia district of Omórfita (Küçük Kaymaklı), where an EOKA detachment under one **Nikos Sampson** rampaged through, seizing seven hundred hostages. In retaliation the Armenian community, accused of siding with the Greek Cypriots, was expelled by TMT from North Nicosia on 23 December, and mainland Turkish troops left their Gönyeli barracks next day to take up positions along the Nicosia–Kyrenia road, with more forces concentrated on the Turkish mainland opposite; the mainland Greek force at Yerólakkos also deployed itself. Barriers, known as the **Green Line** after an English officer's crayon mark on a map, were set up between Greek and Turkish quarters in Nicosia after a UK-brokered ceasefire took effect on Christmas Day.

Already, all Turkish Cypriots had **resigned** from the government and police forces, to begin setting up a parallel administration in north Nicosia and in the rapidly growing number of **enclaves**. Denктаş and the TMT promulgated a communal law making it “treasonous” for any Turkish Cypriot to have commercial or administrative dealings with Greek Cypriots, a ban enforced by ostracization, beatings or worse. Any Turkish Cypriot who might have thought to continue at his post in south Nicosia would have to run a gauntlet of both his own co-religionists, enforcing the sequestration, and Greeks who might shoot first and ask questions later. The enclaves in fact constituted a deliberate policy of laying the basis for later partition. Most Turkish-Cypriots from now on asserted that the 1960 constitution was **defunct**; there were merely two provisional regimes on the island pending the establishment of a new arrangement. Makarios agreed that the 1960 constitution was hopeless – but differed in his conclusions: namely that majority rule would prevail as per his suggested amendments, with minority guarantees, whether the Turks liked it or not.

International repercussions

Because of the superpower interests involved, Cypriot intercommunal disputes again took on **international** dimensions. The Greek Cypriots preferred, as they always had done, the UN as a forum; the US, UK, mainland Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots pressed for **NATO intervention**. Turkish opinion, expressed through Küçük's and Denктаş's rightist Turkish National Party, helped

plant the seeds of implacable American hostility to Makarios by successfully painting him with a pink (if not red) brush, calling attention to his forthright espousal of the **Non-Aligned Movement** and purchase of arms from the USSR and Czechoslovakia. In the end, the Cypriot government, with the support of the Soviets and Greek Premier George Papandreou, had its way: in February 1964, a UN resolution dispatched **UNFICYP** (UN Forces in Cyprus) for an initial three-month peace-keeping assignment – extended later to six months and renewed since then without a break. In addition, a **tripartite truce force**, composed of Greek, Turkish and British (from the sovereign bases) soldiers, was formed, under the partial leadership of Lieutenant Commander Martin Packard, and a UN civilian mediator was also appointed. George Ball, who as US under-secretary of state had unsuccessfully tried to persuade Makarios to accept occupation by a NATO landing force, was later overheard to say “that son of a bitch [ie Makarios] will have to be killed before anything happens in Cyprus”.

Little was accomplished immediately by UNFICYP; the death toll from communal disturbances in the six months after December 1963 reached nearly six hundred, with Turkish Cypriots suffering disproportionately. The presence of ten thousand **mainland Greek troops**, now also on the island, gave EOKA and Greek Cypriots a false sense of being able to act with impunity. After TMT occupied St Hilarion castle and the Kyrenia–Nicosia road to form a core enclave, US President Lyndon Johnson sent Turkish Premier İnönü a letter, in his inimitably blunt style, warning him of plans to invade. At the same time the US administration pressurized Greece to follow its prescription or possibly face Turkey alone on the battlefield; heads were to be knocked together, if necessary, to preserve NATO’s southeast flank.

The UN mediator having reached a dead end (and himself soon dying anyway), the **Acheson Plan** – named after the incumbent US secretary of state – was unveiled in mid-1964. It amounted to double *énosis*: the bulk of the island to Greece, the rest (plus the cession of the tiny but strategic Greek isle of Kastellórizo) to Turkey – effectively partition and the disappearance of Cyprus as an independent entity. After initial consideration by both Greece and Turkey, the Greeks rejected the idea because of vociferous objections from Nicosia.

The Turkish-Cypriot enclaves

The **Kókkina incident** (see p.185) made world headlines in August 1964, when the newly formed National Guard, commanded by a returned Grivas, attacked this coastal enclave in an effort to halt the landing of supplies and weapons from Turkey. Guarantors Greece and Turkey were again brought to the brink of war as Turkey extensively bombed and strafed the Pólis area, causing numerous casualties, and Makarios threatened to sanction attacks on Turkish Cypriots throughout the island unless Turkey ceased its air strikes. It was the first, but not the last, time that US-supplied NATO weapons were used in contravention of their ostensible purpose.

Since January 1964, **Martin Packard** – one of the few British military personnel to emerge with much credit from the post-independence period – had been conducting an all-but-one-man, increasingly successful campaign to rebuild trust between the two communities, persuading combatants to disarm, and proposing to dissolve the newly formed enclaves and escort the inhabitants back to formerly mixed villages, with UN protection where necessary. But his reintegrationist campaign was opposed by interested parties, who succeeded in securing Packard’s removal from the island in June despite objections from both

Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot community leaders with whom he was uniformly popular (see p.443, “Books”, for more).

Any residual trust between the two island communities was destroyed by the end of 1964, with the Turkish Cypriots well **barricaded** in their enclaves, the central government responding by placing a ban on their acquisition of a wide range of essential materials deemed militarily strategic. The enclave inmates, numbers swelled by Turkish army personnel, retaliated by keeping all Greeks out, setting up a TMT-run state-within-a-state with its own police, radio station and other services, which provocation EOKA could not resist on numerous occasions.

Despite all this, Cypriot **economic progress** post-independence was considerable – though heavily biased towards the Greek Cypriot community, whose attitude towards the Turkish Cypriots at best resembled sending naughty children to bed without supper. The first of many **irrigation dams** to ease chronic water problems began to appear on the slopes of the Tróódhos range and Kyrenia hills. Tourism became important for the first time, primarily on the sandy coast to either side of Famagusta and to a lesser extent around Kyrenia.

A twilight zone: 1965–74

The new UN mediator **Galo Plaza**, in his March 1965 report, astutely diagnosed the shortcomings of the 1960 constitution and made forthright suggestions for a new one – principally that the Greek Cypriots must decisively renounce *énoxis* and that the Turkish Cypriots must acquiesce to majority rule, with guarantees for certain rights. This did not go over well with them or with the mainland Turks, who arranged to send Plaza packing.

After April 1967 Greece had been taken over by a **military junta**, anxious – with American approval – to remove the “Cyprus problem” from the global agenda. However, secret summer meetings with Turkey, exploring variations of the Acheson Plan, came to nothing. In November, Grivas’s National Guard attacked **Kofinou**, another enclave between Limassol and Larnaca, with considerable loss of Turkish life; Greece and Turkey both mobilized, Ankara again tendered an ultimatum to Athens and American diplomats got little sleep as they shuttled between the two capitals. Despite its soldierly composition, the Greek regime meekly complied with Turkish demands; **Grivas** and most of the ten thousand smuggled-in mainland soldiers were shipped back to Greece. The National Guard, however, remained – a Trojan horse for future plots.

In 1968 the UN sponsored direct **intercommunal negotiations**, which sputtered along until 1974, with **Glafkos Clerides**, president of the House of Representatives, and Rauf Denktaş as interlocutors. Substantial agreement on many points was actually reached, despite the Turks pressing for implementation of a high degree of local communal power in place of a spoiler role at the national level, and the Greek side holding out for more comprehensive central control. But Makarios never made the necessarily dramatic, generous concessions, and Clerides repeatedly threatened to resign in the absence of what he saw as a lack of consistent support from Makarios.

The enclaves were, though, finally **opened** to the extent of supplies going in and people coming out; with UN mediation, local arrangements – such as joint police patrols – were reached for a semblance of normal life in less tense areas of island. But in most respects Turkish-Cypriot community leaders still enforced a policy of **self-segregation** as a basis for a federal state. But whether they

meant a federation as most outsiders understood it, or merely federation masquerading as partition, was debatable. The Turkish Cypriots, biding their time in cramped and impoverished quarters, perhaps knew something that the Greek Orthodox islanders didn't or wouldn't realize: that Turkey was in earnest about **supporting** their cause materially and militarily as well as morally.

Both Makarios and Küçük were overwhelmingly re-elected early in 1968, though Makarios's three bishops had repudiated him for dropping *énosis* as a realistic option. This was just one aspect of his **deteriorating relations** with the Greek colonels, who – with CIA approval – instigated repeated **plots** to eliminate him using Greek regular army officers, who by now controlled most of the National Guard. A bizarre **counterplot** of the same year deserves mention: **Polycarpus Georgadjis**, a former EOKA operative and minister of interior, provided one Alekos Panagoulis in Greece with the explosives for an abortive attempt to kill junta chief Papadopoulos. Exactly why Yiorgadjis would do this – considering that EOKA and junta aims were now identical – remains a mystery; he was also implicated in a March 1970 attempt on Makarios's life, and was himself assassinated by two unknown persons a week later (his widow, interestingly, soon married Tassos Papadopoulos, the 2003–08 president of Cyprus).

Grivas slipped back into Cyprus during 1971 and founded **EOKA-B** for the purpose of resuming the struggle for *énosis*, but the old trouble-maker, in his 70s, died in January 1974, still in hiding. EOKA-B and its allies set in motion various devices to destabilize the elected government of Cyprus, reserving – as had its predecessor – special malice for AKEL. Publicly, the Greek junta demanded, and eventually got, the resignation of **Spyros Kyprianou**, long-time foreign minister and future president. The three dissident bishops of 1968, still acting as junta placemen, proclaimed Makarios defrocked, reducing him to lay status. Makarios retaliated by **dismissing the three bishops** with the help of other Middle Eastern prelates and creating three new, subordinate bishoprics – those of Mórfou, Nicosia and Limassol – to reduce the future chances of such a ploy. He was re-elected as president in 1973 unopposed; in the same year Küçük was replaced as nominal vice-president by Rauf Denktaş.

1974: coup and invasion

The Greek junta, by early 1974 tottering and devoid of any popular support at home, now tried a Falklands-type diversion, with the encouragement – if not outright connivance – of CIA agents in Athens. Makarios, well aware of the intrigues of the junta's cadres in his National Guard, had proscribed EOKA-B in April 1974, and wrote to the Greek president on July 2 demanding that these officers be withdrawn. The junta's response was to give the go-ahead for the **archbishop's overthrow**, which, despite advance knowledge, Makarios's primarily left-wing and poorly armed supporters proved powerless to prevent.

Early on **July 15**, National Guard troops attacked the archiepiscopal palace, gutted it and announced the archbishop's demise. But Makarios, in the nearby presidential residence, escaped to loyalist strongholds in Páfos district; on learning this, a Washington diplomat was overheard to remark, "How inconvenient". With British help, the archbishop left the island for the UK, which offered lukewarm support, and then the US, where he was refused recognition as head of state by Henry Kissinger, a man who had done as much as anyone to oppose – and possibly depose – him.

Unfazed, the coup protagonists proclaimed as president **Nikos Sampson**, long-time EOKA activist, Turkophobe warlord and head of the (anything but) Progressive Party. A contemporary foreign correspondent characterized him as “an absolute idiot, though not quite illiterate – a playboy gunman. He spends every night in cabarets getting drunk, dancing on tables, pulling off his shirt to show his scars.” A notorious photo showed him in battle regalia, one foot atop a dead Turkish Cypriot he’d killed as a “hunting trophy”. Small wonder, then, that his term of office and EOKA-B’s direct rule would last exactly eight days.

On reflection (not their strong point), the EOKA-B people might have realized that their coup would give Turkey a perfect **pretext** to do what it had long contemplated: partition Cyprus, claiming as guarantor to be acting as protectors of the threatened minority. Indeed many Turkish-Cypriot fighters in the North pre-1974 recall receiving coded messages weeks before the coup, telling them to prepare for action. Post-coup international opinion initially favoured Turkey, whose prime minister **Bülent Ecevit** went through the proper legalistic motions on July 16–17 of flying to Britain to propose joint action for protecting the Turkish minority, restoring Cypriot independence and demanding that Athens withdraw its officers. While Sampson did indeed say “Now that we’ve finished with Makarios’s people, let’s start on the Turks,” EOKA-B finally killed more Greek Cypriot opponents – an estimated five hundred interred in mass, unmarked graves, including many wounded buried alive – than the almost three hundred Turkish Cypriots slaughtered at Tókhni and three villages around Famagusta.

“Phase I”

Just before dawn on July 20, Ecevit authorized the **Turkish invasion** of Cyprus, entailing amphibious armoured landings, napalm strikes, bombing raids on many towns and paratroop drops around Kyrenia and Nicosia. “**Phase I**” of the campaign lasted from **July 20 to July 30**: despite the demoralizing coup, and being outnumbered four to one, the Greek Cypriots managed to confine Turkish forces to a lozenge-shaped bridgehead straddling the Nicosia–Kyrenia road. The initial Turkish landing west of Kyrenia, the first time its forces had fought since the Korean War, was a near-fiasco, as were many supporting naval and air force operations. For starters, Turkey was expecting little resistance from the Greek Cypriots, and threw poorly equipped, trained and disciplined conscripts into the opening battles. Soldiers disembarked without water bottles in the July heat, and tanks rolled ashore with no ammunition and insufficient fuel. Turkish air-force jets managed to sink two of their own landing craft, while completely missing the contents of a Cypriot National Guard tank camp (though the Greek Cypriots also mistakenly shot down two Hercules transports bringing reinforcements from Greece). A Greek naval fleet, a radar phantom as it turned out, was reported southwest of Cyprus; three Turkish destroyers sailed to meet it, but Turkish jets attacked and sank one of these when the captain failed to give the right password (the US had supplied Greece and Turkey with identical vessels). The brigadier general in charge of operations was killed as he came ashore, with the next-highest-ranking officer, for some days, being a captain. UN observers subsequently estimated a ratio of seven Turkish to every Greek casualty over the war; much of this can be attributed to pre-landing lectures by Turkish religious leaders, who assured the raw recruits that death in battle with the infidels ensured a direct path to Paradise. To such pep talks – and not (as often alleged) the ingestion of drugs – was owed the repeated and oft-corroborated spectacle of human wave attacks by wild-eyed Turkish cannon

fodder, marching zombie-like into Greek-Cypriot machine-gun fire, until the latter ran out of ammunition and had to retreat.

In Greece, the junta chiefs ordered their army to attack Turkey across the Thracian frontier; its officers refused, precipitating the junta's collapse on **July 23**, the same day Sampson fell from power. Glafkos Clerides replaced him as acting head of state in Makarios's absence, as a civilian government took power in Athens. The first round of hastily arranged **negotiations** between the Greek, Turkish and British foreign ministers convened in **Geneva**, resulting in the ceasefire of July 30. On August 8, talks resumed, with Clerides and Denktas additionally present. The Turkish military, with little to show for the heavy casualties sustained during Phase I, and their forces increasingly vulnerable as the Greek Cypriots comprehensively mined the perimeter of their toehold, began to pressurize their civilian leaders to be given a freer hand. Accordingly, on the night of August 13–14, the Turkish foreign minister gave Clerides an **ultimatum** demanding approval of one or the other Turkish plans for "federation": either six dispersed cantons or a single amalgamated one under Turkish-Cypriot control, adding up to 34 percent of Cyprus. Clerides asked for 36 hours to consult his government, which was refused at 3am on August 14; ninety minutes later, the Turkish army resumed its offensive.

"Phase II"

"**Phase II**" was a two-day rout of the Greek Cypriots, who had insufficient armour and no air support to stop the Turkish juggernaut, this time manned by crack troops. The Greek Cypriots – as opposed to the Greek officers, whom the Turks always regarded with contempt – had acquitted themselves splendidly during "Phase I", far exceeding their brief to hold the line for 36 hours until massive aid arrived from Greece, which never did; come "Phase II", they were completely exhausted, demoralized and literally out of fuel and ammunition.

The behaviour of the Turkish infantry in both phases of the war featured sporadic, **gratuitous violence** against Greek-Cypriot civilians unlucky enough to lie in their path; word of the rapes, murders and widespread looting which marked their advance was enough to convince approximately 165,000 Greek Cypriots to flee for their safety. Had they in fact not done so, the entire purpose of the campaign – to create an ethnically cleansed sanctuary for the Turkish Cypriots – would have been confounded.

At a second ceasefire on August 16, the areas occupied by the Turkish army totalled 38 percent of the island's area – slightly more than Turkey had demanded at Geneva – abutting a scalloped boundary, henceforth the **Attila Line**, extending from Káto Pýrgos in Tillyría to Famagusta. The Greek-Cypriot **death toll**, combatants and civilians together, rose to 3850. The **missing** supposedly numbered 1619, though it now seems likely that several hundred of these were leftists killed by EOKA-B activists and Greek junta officers, as noted on p.393, or – as Turkish army units often found them – chained to their gun emplacements or shot in the back. Others – over two hundred National Guardsmen – were shown by Greek-Cypriot journalists in spring 1998 to have been killed by the Turkish army and buried in unmarked graves by the Southern government, to be exploited for propaganda purposes. Turkish Cypriots living in the South were put in an untenable position by the Turkish "peace action", as it was termed; EOKA-B units occupied or cleared out most of their enclaves, with reprisal killings at several points.

Since July 15, a flurry of **UN Security Council resolutions**, calling on all concerned to desist from warlike actions and respect Cypriot independence,

had been piling up, blithely disregarded then and ever since. With the benefit of hindsight, UK parliamentary and US congressional committees duly condemned the timidity, lack of imagination and simple shamefulness of their governments' respective past policies towards Cyprus, specifically the absence of any meaningful initiative to stop the Turkish war machine. The **British** pleaded that with just over five thousand men on the sovereign bases, there was (despite their role as guarantor) little they could have done – other than what they actually did: half-heartedly interpose a small fleet between Cyprus and Anatolia as a deterrent in the four days before July 20, ferry tourists to safety out of the North, and shelter in Sovereign Base territory Turkish Cypriots fleeing EOKA-B gunmen in the South. In retrospect, it seems the UK had been content to follow American dictates rather than pursue an independent course.

On the part of the **US**, there was more of a failure of will than inability to do something. President Nixon, on the point of resigning over Watergate, had deferred to the archpriest of *realpolitik*, **Henry Kissinger**, who made no secret of his “tilt” towards Turkey rather than Greece as the more valuable ally in the Aegean – once the colonels' junta had served its purpose – or of his distaste for Makarios. Thus was the integrity of Cyprus sacrificed to NATO power politics. The only substantive American congressional action, over Kissinger's objections, was the temporary **suspension of military aid** to Turkey.

During anti-American riots in Nicosia on **August 19**, **US Ambassador Rodger Davies** and a Cypriot embassy employee were gunned down by EOKA-B hitmen aiming deliberately from an unfinished building opposite. Assertions that Davies was the CIA paymaster and handler for the EOKA-B coup do not hold water, as he was an Arabist by training and had been in the job for less than two months – though this does not rule out “conduct incompatible with diplomatic status” by his predecessor, for whom the gunmen may have mistaken him. Eleven days later, **Vassos Lyssarides**, head of the socialist **EDEK** party supporting Makarios, narrowly escaped death at the hands of the same bunch. These lurid events demonstrated that clapping Sampson in jail – where he remained until 1992 – wouldn't cause his associates to simply disappear.

1974–91: de facto partition

While still acting head of state, Clerides acknowledged that the Greeks and Greek Cypriots had been acting for years as if Turkey did not exist, and that some sort of **federal republic** was the best Cyprus could hope for. Makarios returned on December 7, 1974 to a diminished realm, and contradicted Clerides: the Greek Cypriots should embark on a “long-term struggle”, using their favourite method of **internationalization**, to induce the Turkish army to leave and get optimum terms from the Turkish Cypriots. This prefigured a final break between the two men the following year. In his homecoming speech in Nicosia, with half the South turned out to welcome him, Makarios also forgave his opponents – not that he had much choice, with EOKA-B operatives still swaggering about in full battledress. But others, especially those who had lost relatives at the hands of either EOKA-B or the Turks, were not in such an accommodating mood; three-plus decades on, assessing blame for the 1974 fiasco still occupies a certain amount of the South's agenda, and few people are willing to discuss it publicly (the main reason it took three editions of this guide to recruit a Greek-Cypriot viewpoint for “The events of summer 1974”, p.414).

Top priority was given to **rehousing refugees** from both communities: the Turkish Cypriots simply occupied abundant abandoned Greek property in the North, but it took the South more than a decade to adequately shelter those who had fled the North. The international community, so disgracefully sluggish

Politics and elections in the South

Coalitions are a fact of life among the Greek Cypriots, since no one party is strong enough to govern alone. And in such a small society horse-trading and flexibility are vital; stances or declarations of one campaign are cheerfully eaten in the presence of new coalition partners at the next elections. Even very small parties – the threshold for entry into the parliament is 1.8 percent of the vote nationwide – are assiduously courted as partners, while shifts of party share of even a percentage point or two are hailed as major victories, or catastrophes. The South's **president** exercises considerable power, appointing all ministers. Both presidential and **parliamentary** elections occur every five years, but are at present out of sync: the former in years ending in 3 and 8, the latter in years ending in 1 and 6.

Tó Kypriakó or the “**Cyprus Question**” is theoretically the paramount electoral issue. In general, centre-right **DIKO** has stood for an idealistic solution, relying on cumulative international pressures to get the Turkish army to depart and the Turkish Cypriots to come to terms. Centrist **DISY**, preferring a pro-NATO/EU alignment, has advocated pragmatic deal-cutting directly with the Turkish Cypriots to get as many refugees home as quickly as possible. **AKEL** and **EDEK** point to their record of never having systematically harassed the Turkish-Cypriot community as a valuable asset for bridge-building in a theoretical federal republic. Left unarticulated are the massive concessions required, with some politician(s) allotted the unenviable task of announcing which refugee constituents could go home to the North, and who would have to stay in the South. After 1974, leftist parties were in a position to exert additional pressure, with many **social-welfare measures** introduced for the first time to alleviate some of the misery caused by the refugee influx.

In the House of Representatives elections of **1976**, **AKEL**, **EDEK** and Makarios's Popular Front combined to shut out Clerides' **DISY** party, thanks to a first-past-the-post system. After Makarios's death in 1977, his groomed successor Kyprianou served out the remainder of the archbishop's presidential term, then re-elected unopposed in **1978** as head of **DIKO**, an ostensibly new party, but still widely seen as Makarios's creature.

By **1981**, the system had changed to proportional representation; **AKEL** and **DISY** finished in a dead heat, with **DIKO** and **EDEK** holding the balance of power in the last 35-seat parliament; the **1983** presidential voting returned Kyprianou to office with **AKEL** backing, again excluding Clerides.

In the **1988** presidential contest **George Vassiliou**, a professional businessman and political outsider, was elected, backed by **AKEL** and **DISY** who, despite their wide differences on domestic issues, agreed that the timely resolution of the “Cyprus Question” was imperative. The **1991** parliamentary polls showed a slight rightward swing in the House, now enlarged to 56 seats.

On his fourth try for the presidency in February **1993**, **DISY** candidate **Clerides** upset **AKEL**-supported incumbent Vassiliou by less than two thousand votes in run-off polling. The result was regarded as a rejection of the UN-sponsored negotiations to date and an endorsement of Clerides' intent to pursue EU membership more strongly. The parliamentary elections of **1996** saw **DISY** and **AKEL** representation enhanced at the expense of **DIKO** and **EDEK**, though **DISY** entered into a coalition with **EDEK** (dissolved in January 1999). Clerides was re-elected president in **1998** by another razor-thin margin, polling second in a crowded first-round field but besting independent George Iakovou in the run-off.

while the problem was being created, was reasonably generous and prompt with reconstruction **aid** – aid which, however, went primarily to the South.

Strangely, **intercommunal negotiations resumed** almost immediately, though at first they centred almost entirely on the fate of Cypriots caught on

The House elections of May **2001** were on one level a reprise of 1981's, with AKEL and DISY again neck-and-neck, but with some startling differences. An unprecedented eight parties got parliamentary representation, 23 new deputies included six women among them, but the biggest surprise was the selection, with support from DIKO and EDEK (briefly renamed KISOS), of AKEL head Dimitris Christofias as president of the House, succeeding Kyprianou. This was an historic first occupation of high office by Cyprus Communists, defying DISY warnings that this would send the "wrong" message to the EU, and seen as a quid pro quo for AKEL's support of a DIKO or KISOS presidential candidate in 2003.

In the presidential contest of February **2003**, Clerides – despite a constitutional ban on a third run – announced in January that he would stand for a limited term. His opponent, DIKO's Tassos Papadopoulos, gained the support of AKEL as promised, plus EDEK and the Greens, scoring a decisive first-round victory over Clerides.

The first **Euro elections** with Cypriot participation, in June 2004, saw the four seats at stake taken by DISY and AKEL. In theory two more seats are reserved for Turkish Cypriots, should a settlement materialize before the next Euro elections in 2009.

The May **2006** House poll saw DIKO and EDEK improve their standing at the expense of AKEL and DISY. This made a repeat Papadopoulos victory in the February **2008** presidential contest more likely – until AKEL House chief Dimitris Christofias threw his hat in the ring. In a three-way contest with DISY figure Ioannis Kasoulides, with ballot numbers swelled by special DISY- and AKEL-chartered aircraft bringing home overseas Cypriots to vote, "Tassos" was shockingly eliminated in the first round, with Christofias besting Kasoulides in the run-off, then forming a "unity" government of AKEL, EDEK and DIKO ministers.

Greek-Cypriot political parties

AKEL *Anorthotikón Kómma tou Ergazoménuo Laou* or "Regenerative Party of the Working People" – in plain English, the Communist Party of Cyprus; historical enemies of EOKA and conciliatory towards the Turkish Cypriots. Until the early 1990s unreconstructed rather than Euro-communist, but now bourgeois and "social-democratic". Chaired by President Dimitris Christofias.

DIKO *Dhimokratikó Kómma* or "Democratic Party", centre-right party that's an outgrowth of Makarios's Popular Front; pursues a relatively tough line in negotiations with the North. Marios Karoyian has been party chief since 2006.

DISY *Dhimokratikós Synayermós* or the "Democratic Rally", formerly chaired by Glafkos Clerides, now headed by Nicos Anastasiades; despite a right-wing domestic and foreign policy, was the only party to back the Annan Plan.

EDEK *Eniéa Dhimokratikí Énosis Kéndrou* or "United Democratic Union of the Centre" – despite the name, a socialist party led since the 1960s by Vassos Lyssarides, perennial also-rans and coalition partners; after the 2001 elections, Lyssarides finally bowed out in favour of new chief Yiannakis Omirou.

Kínima Ikológi Perivallontistí (Cyprus Green Party) The ecologists, who managed to get a parliamentary seat in both the 2001 and 2006 elections.

New Horizons/European Party Irredentist, anti-federation party, opposed to UN-brokered negotiations; got a seat in the 2001 election, increased to three in 2006 by merger with European Party.

the “wrong” side. Greeks in the South separated from relatives and homes in the North were at first allowed to rejoin them; the government initially attempted to prevent Southern Turks from **trekking north**, but by early 1975 this too had happened. This departure was not entirely voluntary, especially in the case of Turkish Cypriots with extensive properties or businesses in the South, or with Orthodox Christian spouses; accounts abound, especially in the Páfos area, of Turkish and British army trucks virtually rounding up Turkish Cypriots, with their neighbours compelled to rescue those – usually non-observant Muslims or converts to Orthodoxy – who wished to stay behind. Once these Turks were safely on the “right” side of the Attila Line, most remaining northern Greeks were expelled and the North pronounced, over the South’s protests, that an equitable exchange of populations had been carried out.

The North declared itself the **Turkish Federated State of Cyprus** (TFSC) in February 1975, though as always what the Turkish Cypriots meant by federation, and with whom, was quite different from what the South had in mind. Clerides and Denktaş, brought together again by UN Secretary-General **Kurt Waldheim**, made hopeful noises through much of 1975, but no substantive progress was registered. In 1977, Makarios and Denktaş met for the first time in fourteen years at the latter’s request, agreeing on various **general guidelines** for a bicommunal, federal republic, the details of territorial jurisdiction to be determined later but envisioning a reduction in the amount Turkish-Cypriot-held territory.

After **Makarios died** in August 1977, **Spyros Kyprianou** replaced him as president and Greek-Cypriot representative at the on-again, off-again talks. As an initial goodwill measure, it was first suggested in 1978 that the empty **ghost town of Varósha** be resettled by its former Greek-Cypriot inhabitants: the Greeks wanted this to precede any other steps, while the Turks would only countenance it under limited conditions and as part of an overall settlement. The reopening of Nicosia international airport was also periodically proposed, though it is now obsolete and virtually unusable owing to urban growth (and summer temperatures in the Mesaoría, which limit modern jets). In 1981, Waldheim seized the initiative by presenting an “evaluation” of the talks thus far, and generating for the first time **detailed proposals** for the mechanics of a federal republic, which came to nothing.

In the international arena, the South increasingly protested against Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot practices in the North – specifically the **expulsion** of most Greek Cypriots and the denial of human rights to those remaining, the **settlement** of numerous Anatolian Turks to alter the demographic balance of the island and vandalism against Greek religious property. In short order a comprehensive and well-orchestrated embargo of the North was imposed with the assistance of most international agencies, which extended from declarations of its postal service and ports of entry as invalid, to consistent referral to the North’s officeholders, civil servants and government as “so-called” or within inverted commas. Such boycotts of the North have ensured – among other things – that **archeological sites** are mostly neglected, since no archeologists would be permitted to work in a Greek-speaking country again if they were known to have visited the North, even just to inspect their old digs.

The North put another spanner in the works by unilaterally declaring full independence on November 15, 1983 as the **Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus** (TRNC), generating the usual storm of pious UN resolutions of condemnation and widespread overseas support for the Greek-Cypriot position. To date no other state besides Turkey has recognized the TRNC. Yet talks towards a peaceful island-wide solution continued: early 1984 saw more proposals by Kyprianou to the UN, not significantly different from those before

or since. **Javier Perez de Cuellar**, the new Secretary-General, presented successively refined draft frameworks for a federal settlement between 1985 and 1986; first the South said yes, but the North no; then the Turks agreed, but Kyprianou wavered until the **opportunity was lost** – behaviour for which he was roundly pilloried, and which contributed to his loss of office in 1988. He returned from the political dead in 1996, serving as president of the House of Representatives until shortly before his death in 2002.

1991–95: more fruitless talk

Late in 1991, Cyprus returned to the world stage; President George Bush, needing another foreign-policy feather in his cap prior to the 1992 US elections, called for **new peace conferences**, and visited both Turkey and Greece enlisting support – the first American presidential junket to either country in decades. Intercommunal meetings did not actually materialize until mid-1992, with **Boutros Boutros-Ghali** now UN Secretary-General. His “Set of Ideas” was broadly similar to all previous proposals: Varósha and some or all of the Mórfou plain would revert to Greek-Cypriot control, and Turkish-Cypriot-administered territory would shrink to 28 percent of the island’s surface area. Left discussable was the degree of Greek refugees’ return to the North; by gerrymandering the boundaries of the Turkish-Cypriot zone, most Greek Cypriots could go home without complications – Varósha and Mórfou taking most of the total – and even if all Greeks formerly resident in the agreed Turkish zone decided to go back, they would still be in a minority there.

Politically, a joint foreign ministry and finance ministry was foreseen, with the Cyprus pound reintroduced throughout the island. Either a rotating or an ethnically stipulated presidency was suggested, plus a two-house legislature, with the upper house biased towards the Turkish Cypriots in the sense that each federal unit would be represented equally, as the states are in the US Senate, rather than proportionately. Boutros-Ghali circulated a **tentative map** showing proposed adjustments of territory in a bizonal federation, to which many in the North reacted strongly. “We won’t be refugees a third time” was a typical headline, referring to the previous compulsory shifts of 1964 and 1974.

July and October sessions between Vassiliou and Denктаş at the UN were unproductive; the Security Council passed yet another **resolution** in November 1992, the most strongly worded in years, mostly blaming failed negotiations on Denктаş for refusing to accept the Boutros-Ghali settlement guidelines. Denктаş’s reaction was to threaten immediate resignation. Many began to suspect that Denктаş was content with the status quo, and had merely been humouring world opinion by his attendance at successive conferences.

Cyprus virtually disappeared from the international agenda during 1993 and 1994, except for the UN’s recycling of the “Set of Ideas” as the so-called “**Confidence Building Measures**” (CBMs), in particular the rehabilitation of Nicosia airport and Varósha, and UN-mediated “informal talks” between Denктаş and new Greek-Cypriot president Clerides during October 1994. The UN announced that all essential elements for a solution were on the table, with only the political will lacking on each side to implement one.

Since his election in 1993, President Clerides had presided over a progressively **rightward tilt** in Southern politics. One conspicuous instance of this, early in 1995, was the reinstatement with back pay of 62 coup supporters – educators, civil servants and police officers who’d been cashiered years before – and the

Politics and elections in the North

Given the record of murderous suppression by TMT of its opponents, multiple parties or even factions were not actively encouraged among Turkish Cypriots until well after the founding of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus in 1975. Even since, dubious tactics have often been used to nip budding opposition, though since the late 1990s conditions have more resembled genuine **pluralism**.

In **North Cyprus**, the political designations “Left” and “Right” do not equate to their meanings elsewhere: leftist parties advocate economic liberalism, free trade and a positive attitude towards the EU, along with an unfettered press and a more flexible position on the “Cyprus Question”, while conservative parties stand for heavy state intervention in commerce, protectionism for select industries, complete deferral to Turkey rather than the EU, a swollen civil service and a hardline stance in negotiations with the South.

North Cyprus has a tiny electorate of about 125,000, with a high degree of **overlap** between government figures, business bigwigs and the habitual ruling parties, with politicking inevitably personalized. Though both a **president and a prime minister** are stipulated, President Denktaş was always the dominant figure until his 2005 retirement. Presidential and parliamentary elections have been held more or less together every five years, recently in years ending 5 and 0.

The first northern elections were in **1976**: Denktaş won easily with three-fourths of the vote and a like percentage of seats for his **UBP** in a forty-seat Assembly. In **1981** the UBP no longer enjoyed an absolute majority, sharing a hung parliament with the **TKP** and the **CTP**. Following an unstable period, the assembly was expanded to fifty seats, allowing Denktaş to fill ten vacancies with compliant appointees. In **1985**, only parties polling over eight percent were awarded seats, forcing splinter factions to disappear or amalgamate. A prohibition against more than two consecutive presidential terms was eliminated, and Denktaş ran as an **independent**. Although he retained office, the UBP's share of votes declined to just over a third, reflecting widespread disillusionment. Yet because of the various “reforms”, its proportion of Assembly seats remained about half.

Denktaş was re-elected again in early **1990**, and prior to the May Assembly elections, more **changes in election laws** were introduced. These included a bonus-seat system for high-vote parties and a prohibition against coalition governments. The opposition's response to this last condition was to combine three smaller parties into the **DMP** (Democratic Struggle Party), running on a platform of less corruption, better economic management and liberalization of the official electronic media. But with just under half the vote, the DMP received less than one-third of Assembly seats, because of the bonus rule. Despite voter intimidation and the biased media, the UBP might well have still won fair elections.

In late 1992 Denktaş fell out with his prime minister **Derviş Eroğlu**, who accused the president of being (of all things) too “flexible” in dealings with the South. Ten MPs loyal to Denktaş defected, forming the *Demokrat Partisi* (**DP**), led by Hakkı Atun and Serdar Denktaş. **December 1993** elections resulted in a near-tie between Eroğlu's UBP and the DP, a deadlock broken by DP's entry into an unprecedented

exiling of their opponents to minor posts. This was done unilaterally by the Clerides administration, over the objections of his parliament.

Spates of **terror attacks** and **gangland crimes** convulsed the South throughout 1995. The campaign of terrorist group EKAS, the “Greek-Cypriot Liberation Army”, to extort donations from wealthy businessmen for ostensibly patriotic purposes was suppressed, but their activities were overshadowed by a series of car bombings, arson attacks and fatal shootings, all part of a battle to control the lucrative trade in cabaret girls, gambling dens and drugs. None of

coalition with Özker Özgür's CTP. In **March 1995**, this coalition crumbled, which doubtless contributed to Denктаş's decision to stand yet again in April presidential elections, despite his announced intention to resign during 1995. Denктаş suffered the minor humiliation of a runoff against rival Erođlu, which he won through the support of TKP and CTP members convinced Denктаş was the lesser of two evils. Shortly thereafter, the CTP–DP coalition revived under PM Hakkı Atun; but in January 1996, Deputy PM Özker Özgür threw in the towel, exasperated by Denктаş's continued obstructionism in negotiations with the South, and was replaced at the CTP helm by Mehmet Ali Talat.

In **December 1998** parliamentary elections, the DP and TKP seat share remained stable, but the UBP increased its strength, mostly at the CTP's expense – with which, curiously, it entered into yet another coalition until June 2001, when the TKP bowed out and was promptly replaced by the UBP.

Presidential elections of **April 2000** saw a reprise of Denктаş vs. Erođlu, and proved the most bizarre yet. Again Denктаş would have been forced into a runoff against his perennial rival, except that Erođlu mysteriously conceded before the second round took place. No cogent explanation was given, though almost certainly mainland Turkish pressure secured the desired result.

Prior to parliamentary polls of **December 2003**, the authorities attempted to pad the registration rolls by hastily granting North citizenship to settlers, who were expected to vote for anti-settlement parties. The desired result was the CTP forced into a coalition with the DP; this duly collapsed in October 2004, with fresh elections in **February 2005** (after Turkey had received a green light from the EU to begin accession negotiations) rewarding **Mehmet Ali Talat's** CTP with exactly half the seats, but again locked in coalition with the DP. But in **April 2005**, Talat won the presidential contest against Erođlu, and the DP was replaced in the coalition in September 2006 by an independent assemblyman and Mustafa Akıncı's pro-settlement **BDH**.

Turkish-Cypriot political parties

CTP *Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi* or “Republican Turkish Party”, headed by Prime Minister Ferdi Sabit Soyer; analogous to the namesake centre-left-secularist Anatolian party. Theoretically conciliatory towards the South, though has only been effective in this respect since 2007.

DP *Demokrat Partisi*, a personality-centred hiving-off from the UBP and component of recent coalition governments, run by Serdar Denктаş, son of Rauf Denктаş.

TKP *Toplumcu Kurtuluş Partisi* or “Communal Liberation Party”, headed by Mustafa Akıncı, a centre-left grouping strongly favouring rapprochement with the South. Combined in 2003 with pro-settlement United Cyprus Party to form the **BDH** (*Barış ve Demokrasi Hareketi*) or “Peace and Democracy Movement”.

UBP *Ulusal Birlik Partisi* or “National Unity Party”, established by Rauf Denктаş in 1974 and governing the North alone until 1993; now headed by Tahsin Ertuğrođlu.

the crimes was solved, and in December President Clerides made the sensational announcement that this was hardly surprising, given the **police** force's involvement in the underworld, and demanded the resignations of the national police chief and his deputy. All this severely dented the South's overseas image of savouriness and safety, and provided a propaganda windfall to the North, which was not slow to exploit it after years of being on the receiving end of a Southern slander campaign implying that North Cyprus was a dark and dangerous place heaving with Anatolian barbarians.

1996–99: resurgent tensions

Cynics reckon Cyprus only gets international attention when UNFICYP, balking at the cost of operations, threatens to leave; when it's a US presidential election year; or when the Cypriots themselves do something drastic to concentrate overseas minds. Before Bill Clinton, with Haitian, Bosnian and Israeli "successes" notched on his belt, could dispatch special envoy Richard Holbrooke to the island in 1996, events overtook such a turn.

Since a 1992 decision to scale down the UNFICYP presence, a regular pattern of **border incidents** had involved demonstrations by Southern refugee groups attempting to march to their old homes, counter-representations by Northerners and pitched battles on each side with their own police. Usually these were on or near the anniversary of the 1974 events, but every few weeks year-round a young male Greek-Cypriot motorist rammed barriers at a checkpoint and led Turkish soldiers on a merry chase before capture and a long prison term. The northern regime also began abducting or even killing Greek-Cypriot fishermen off Famagusta whom it claimed drifted into its territorial waters, as well as apprehending unarmed Greek Cypriots who strayed too far into the buffer zone.

But the worst such episode was in **August 1996**. Nationalist Greek-Cypriot motorcyclists announced a "rally", beginning in no-longer-divided Berlin and finishing in Kyrenia, to "end" the partition of Cyprus. The Orthodox Church of Cyprus provided material and moral support to the bikers who, though prevented from crossing the Attila Line, caused considerable provocation by riding through the buffer zone near Dherínia, accompanied by hundreds of stone-throwing, shouting **demonstrators**, unrestrained by southern police. The Turkish Cypriots had learned of the rally plans and invited a rent-a-mob of their own: ultra-nationalist, paramilitary Grey Wolves from the Turkish mainland, armed with batons and iron staves. Allowed into the buffer zone by the Turkish army, the Grey Wolves and similarly equipped Turkish-Cypriot policemen administered savage beatings to the Greek Cypriots, killing one – all action broadcast live on international television. Three days later, after the victim's funeral at nearby Paralímni, another riot erupted near Dherínia when the deceased's cousin attempted to scale a flagpole on the Turkish-Cypriot side of the buffer zone and pull down the Turkish flag; he was immediately shot dead by the Turkish Cypriots rather than arrested, and numerous UN peacekeepers were wounded by more Turkish gunfire as the crowds went berserk. The Greek-Cypriot ultra-nationalists had two **martyrs** (as perhaps was intended); belligerent soundbites were heard in Ankara, Athens and Nicosia South and North; and the Southern government – despite never officially endorsing the motorcyclists' rally – laid on a second, de facto state funeral at Paralímni cathedral, attended by major dignitaries in both cases. It took weeks for cooler heads to prevail (the violence badly hurt tourism) and the threat of further skirmishes to recede – but not before two Turkish-Cypriot soldiers had been shot in revenge, by persons unknown firing from the "Five Mile Crossing" of the Dhekélia SBA.

Denktaş broke off further contact with Clerides in 1997, while Clinton's would-be envoy Robert Holbrooke opined that "this island is capable of exploding at any moment". In May 1998, the TRNC position **hardened** still further; Denktaş declared dead the notion of two federated zones under one government and demanded international recognition of the North as a separate and equal state prior to any further negotiations.

Alarmist scenarios of renewed, large-scale fighting on Cyprus were aired, given how each side was **stockpiling heavy weapons**: the Greek Cypriots supplied by

France, Greece, the Czech Republic and Russia, the Turkish Cypriots (of course) by Turkey. Although the South still commanded appreciable international sympathy and an impressive number of UN resolutions in its favour, they would still have come off worse in world opinion – not to mention militarily, outnumbered three to one in manpower – if they used this arms build-up to force the Turkish army off the island. The absence (except for August 1996) of overt clashes since 1974 should not, as the North's backers did, have been mistaken for true peace. Cyprus was still (and remains) one of the most **militarized** territories on earth: nearly 90,000 men under arms on all sides (including UN and British personnel), versus about 250,000 civilian males of fighting age.

Amid the South's resurgent jingoism, a hard-learned lesson of 1974 was in danger of being forgotten: that Cyprus is essentially indefensible from Greece, despite a much-vaunted 1993 defence pact with Greece, involving regular joint exercises with the Greek navy and air force. Without a significant air force of its own, offensive strategy for the South means having permanent, Greek-equipped **air bases** on its territory – an option which continues to preoccupy the Turks as it did during the 1960s. Accordingly, a Greek air-force base for F-16 fighters was built right next to the Páfos civilian airport – far from impregnable and considered locally as something of a joke.

If the Páfos air base concentrated Turkish minds, it was nothing compared to the disquiet provoked by the South's proposed 1997 purchase of sophisticated **Russian SS-300 surface-to-air missiles**. This highly mobile, truck-loaded defensive weapon, together with its state-of-the-art "Tombstone" radar guidance system, was publicly poooh-pooohed by NATO members but privately admitted to be more effective than the Patriots used during the Gulf War. The integrated **radar system**, part-staffed by Russians and to be installed on Mount Olympus near the British site, would also be able to monitor NATO aircraft movements throughout the Middle East. From the moment the scheme was announced, Turkey threatened to use any means necessary – including intercepting the missiles while they sailed through the Bosphorus Straits, or bombing them once delivered – to prevent installation. Apparently they had a healthier respect for the SS-300's potential to upset the local strategic balance than other NATO countries; the missiles were primarily meant to target not fighters but C-series transport planes full of Turkish paratroopers to be dropped on the South, a nightmare scenario for the Greek-Cypriot command.

Throughout 1997 and 1998 diplomatic pressure was brought to bear on President Clerides by the US, UK and others to **cancel** their deployment, while the cash-strapped Russians insisted that the deal was done and that somebody was going to have to cough up the purchase price. Finally, in late December 1998, Clerides caved in and announced that the missiles would be stationed on Crete instead, which only partly mollified the Turks. In retrospect the threatened missile purchase was a clumsily handled bargaining chip, to be abandoned as a "concession" once international attention was again focused on the island; if the Greek Cypriots had really been serious about acquiring both a defence system and a negotiating tactic, they would have installed missiles secretly with no fanfare, presenting it to the world as an accomplished fact.

2000–03: Northern meltdown

Matters might have continued deadlocked indefinitely if domestic unrest in the North, coupled with the collapse of the Turkish economy, hadn't

The Orthodox Church in Cyprus

Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots concede that the former are among the most religiously observant in the Orthodox Christian world, and much more devout than Muslim islanders; in no other eastern-rite country will you find, for example, *nistísima* or special vegetarian fare offered during Lent at local franchises of *McDonald's*. But the faithful have been poorly served in recent years, to put it mildly, by the Autocephalous Church of Cyprus, as ungodly an institution – once up the hierarchy from often conscientious parish priests – as you would never hope to see. It is a (if not the) major obstacle to communal reconciliation, xenophobic, anti-semitic, homophobic, thoroughly corrupt, and often involved in enterprises (especially real estate) that would be the province of lay mafias in other countries.

Church scandals

Much of the period from 1998 to 2008 was occupied by **scandals** which were trumpeted by the media and forfeited the Church much of its previous authority. First there was the 1998 case of the **deacon in Mórfoú diocese**, a candidate for bishop, who took the precepts of the New Testament at face value: succouring the poor and conducting baptisms and weddings free of charge. Archbishop Chrysostomos I of All Cyprus, fearing depletion of the church's coffers, presided over a framing campaign whereby provocateurs tried to implicate the deacon in acts of buggery by throwing condoms into his cesspit, to be conveniently produced as evidence later (unfortunately they neglected to open the packets). When two essential "witnesses" fled abroad, the case was dropped, but the candidacy was already retracted.

The former, mid-1990s **Bishop of Limassol, Chrysanthos**, was among the most compromised in the church's upper echelons. He kept an American mistress and borrowed money to play the Nicosia stock market, losing it all. His creditors blew the whistle, the fraud squad flew out from Britain to interview him, and criminal proceedings were considered; he was defrocked, briefly banned from officiating at any service and made to do austere penances before leaving for America.

Chrysanthos had been instrumental in establishing two **convents** around Limassol; there are ten functioning on Cyprus at present, up from just one in Makarios's time. In the current climate, formerly murmured cynical sentiments are now openly voiced, namely that the convents exist partly to satisfy the "urges" of ecclesiastical higher-ups, who can't be seen visiting the traditional red-light districts or the modern "night clubs" which have replaced them. Assuming, of course, that the majority of the nominally celibate clergy are straight, which seems to be a moot point.

The **Limassol bishop** after 1999, **Athanasios**, proved a completely different sort from his predecessor, taking his pastoral mission seriously – and promised to be a strong candidate in any uninfluenced election to succeed the ailing archbishop of Cyprus. Bishop Chrysostomos of Páfos, sensing his pre-eminent position threatened, attempted during 2000 to repeat the dispatch of the unfortunate Mórfoú deacon by accusing the new bishop of homosexual acts. Two archimandrites (senior priests) and two lay witnesses duly came forward to give evidence; a three-member **ecclesiastical tribunal**, split between the old guard and a reformer, failed to reach the necessary unanimous verdict, but the two veterans refused thereafter to co-officiate with Athanasios. The Church was forced to call in bishops from abroad for a full, thirteen-member **synod** (the island then only had nine), which found the Bishop of Limassol

reignited interest in an equitable settlement, not least among the Northern population.

On July 8, 2000, **Şener Levent**, editor of **Avrupa** (Europe), one of the few opposition newspapers in the North, was detained, along with three of his staff, on charges of spying for the South and "instigating hatred against the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus and the Turkish army", potentially facing five years in

innocent within a day. A resourceful journalist then obtained phone records showing the two lay witnesses to have been coached by the Bishop of Páfos and his crony, the Bishop of Arsinoë (Pólis), and the two civilians were prosecuted and jailed for conspiracy for three months in early 2001. Chrysostomos's reputation, already poor – his nickname in some quarters is “The Goat” – lay in tatters; briefly it looked like he too would face **criminal prosecution**, but in the end only the two archimandrites were charged with conspiracy to defame and went to trial – mysteriously suspended in April 2001 by Attorney General Alekos Markides after Athanasios, acting as a prosecution witness, forgave the two conspirators in court. Cyprus at large was less indulgent; the Church, despite the mysterious halt in proceedings, had had its dirty linen thoroughly washed in public, and its credibility was at rock-bottom.

The main response since has been a massive **recruitment** drive for monks and nuns in schools, an acceleration in the **reoccupation** of empty or derelict monasteries, and their ostentatious signposting despite a resounding lack of intrinsic interest. Monastic premises are just a fraction of the huge amount of **property** owned by the Church, which it collects rents on, or sells outright as building sites, for everything from most foreign embassies to many coastal hotels. Increasingly murmurs are heard that taxes ought to be paid, and that the Autocephalous Church is hardly a “charitable”, institution any longer. But AKEL, the Church's old enemy, was unable or unwilling to obtain any satisfaction on this in the House of Representatives after 2001.

Elections for archbishop

Since 2002, Archbishop Chrysostomos I had become senile, wheelchair-bound and (after 2005) comatose; his staff and family members set to work forging his signature and thus managed to embezzle huge quantities of church funds before being detected. It became clear that a **successor** would have to be chosen while the incumbent was still alive (a Cypriot first), and so Chrysostomos was forcibly retired in autumn 2006. By tradition, the new archbishop ought to be the most senior from among the bishops of Kyrenia, Salamis, Mórfou, Arsinoë, Trimithi, Kýkkou, Limassol, Kition and Páfos – in 2006, the Bishop of Páfos, aka “The Goat”. But in Cyprus bishops and archbishops are elected by a complex system of successive polls: first parishioners choose 1400 delegates, who in turn elect 100 delegates, who then choose the winner together with a tribune of 33 clerics; the support of a civilian political party is also essential. The main candidates were Athanasios of Limassol, the popular Bishop Nikiphoros of Kýkkou, and “The Goat”. To widespread disgust, Athanasios and Chrysostomos cut an under-the-table deal; for reasons unknown, Nikiphoros then quit the race, swinging decisive support to “The Goat”, who hadn't been expected to reach the second round of polling, with only about twenty percent initial support.

Political parties emerged with hardly more credit – AKEL openly backed Nikiphoros, but then waxed indignant when Chrysostomos II of All Cyprus – the ex-Goat – endorsed first incumbent Papadopoulos and then DISY figure Ioannis Kasoulides in the 2008 presidential race. The result of all this is that the church's **prestige** is at an all-time low, unlikely ever to recover until or unless a progressive bishop like Neophytos of Mórfou, who has distinguished himself from his fellows through his support for communal reconciliation and by remaining free from scandal, attains the top office.

jail. Their release ten days later, following local and international pressure, was the cue for opposition demonstrations 10,000 strong; on July 24, more street rallies protesting against the ongoing economic stagnation and the first in a wave of bank failures turned violent, with organizers arrested. Judicial harassment of *Avrupa* continued through the year, with contributing journalists (and politicians) Özker Özgür and İzzet Izcın hauled into court for sedition, and lawsuits by the

Denktaş family for libel. On November 27 the *Avrupa* premises were set alight (an “electrical fault” was officially announced), on May 24, 2001, the printworks used by *Avrupa* were bombed, and by mid-December 2001 *Avrupa* had been closed down and its plant confiscated in lieu of civil damages to the victorious Denktaş. Levent managed to reopen the paper in early 2002, rechristened *Afrika* in line with the Zimbabwe-type public culture prevailing in the North, but ended up serving some months in jail after a fresh prosecution in August 2002. By late 2003, journalists at normally tame *Ortam* and *Kıbrıs* were also being prosecuted for stories deemed insulting to the powers that were.

Meanwhile, a free press was not always foremost in Turkish-Cypriot minds. The implosion of the mainland Turkish banking system early in 2001 took with it most North Cypriot **banks**; by the end of the year seven island-based financial institutions had collapsed, to the tune of \$200 million worth of uninsured deposits. Unlike in Turkey, there were no bailouts whatsoever, and most other banks continued on artificial life-support, acting primarily to launder money and hand out unsecured loans. Only those existing prior to 1974, and insured mainland-based banks, survived. Observers were treated to the unedifying spectacle of increasing destitution juxtaposed with a growing range of consumer durables on sale to an elite of regime-connected apparatchiks that could still afford them.

The mainland Turkish intervention, and its three-decade aftermath, was increasingly seen as a classic example of “Be careful what you wish for”. Though unanimously acclaimed by Turkish Cypriots at the time, a growing proportion of them deemed the mainlanders to have long overstayed their welcome, and to have become new, onerous masters replacing the Greek Cypriots. By paying to keep the North afloat, including directly employing an estimated 36,000, Turkey expected to call the shots locally, down to the last detail. Long-simmering resentment of Turkish tutelage finally boiled over early in 2001, when, in response to an announced \$350 million “aid” package from the mainland, the teachers’ union took out a newspaper advert suggesting what they could do with the money. For their troubles the union offices were raided, a court case instituted, and over the next year various individual instructors sacked from their jobs. Despite this intimidation, they and several other unions, NGOs and opposition parties went on to form the Group of 41 by mid-summer, under the slogan “This Country is Ours”, which would within a year become the 92-member “**Common Vision**”, coordinating street demonstrations over the next twenty months.

The ruling elite was not slow in reacting; the **UHH** (*Ulusal Halk Hareketi* or National Patriotic Movement), seen as the reincarnation of TMT, was formed in May, and promptly stepped up intimidation of anyone wishing to cross into the South, especially to attend communal reconciliation events in the buffer zone, at Pýla village or the Ledra Palace.

Most ominously from the Turkish nationalists’ point of view, during 2001 there was a sharp rise in Turkish-Cypriot applications for **passports** issued by the South. Already, since the early 1990s, there had been an estimated four thousand northerners holding Republic of Cyprus passports, these individuals periodically threatened with prosecution from the TRNC authorities. By late 2005, the figure had reached 35,000 RoC passport-holders in the North. Obtaining such a document was a hedge against there being no settlement in the near future; should the South alone join the EU (as eventually happened), Turkish Cypriots counted among its citizens would be free to seek better lives either in the South or in western Europe. As the GDR’s experience of its citizens fleeing to the West via Hungary in 1989 demonstrated, when a regime starts haemorrhaging its most intrepid folk, its days are numbered.

To all this agitation, Rauf Denктаş had only the following retort: “Those who are against Turkey are wrong. There is no Cypriot culture, apart from our national custom of drinking brandy. There are Turks of Cyprus and Greeks of Cyprus. The only true Cypriots are its donkeys.” The last sentence, unrecorded in the international media, was a calculated jibe at anyone advocating an island-based patriotism; in both Greek and Turkish, “donkey” (and additionally in Turkish, “son of a donkey”) are exceptionally abusive insults – Cypriot farm boys traditionally had their first sexual experience with the back end of a donkey-mare.

Perhaps it was Denктаş’s desire to go down in history as a great statesman; or pressure from Turkish businessmen feeling that the Cypriot tail had wagged the Anatolian dog long enough; or maybe the IMF implying that bail-out aid to the prostrate Turkish economy would be more generous if Cyprus was sorted; or perhaps the looming June 2002 EU decision on Cypriot membership. In any event something – probably not Northern public opinion – prompted Denктаş to **renew communication** with Clerides after a four-year gap, under the aegis of new UN Special Cyprus Adviser Alvaro de Soto. On December 6, 2001, Clerides responded to an invitation from Denктаş to attend dinner in North Nicosia, the first visit by a Greek-Cypriot leader to the Turkish-Cypriot zone since 1974. After a reciprocal visit by Denктаş to the South on December 29, the two men – who had known each other since acting as prosecutor and defence respectively for EOKA suspects being tried in a colonial Crown Court during the 1950s – agreed to meet regularly from mid-January onwards to hammer out a solution.

Against a backdrop of continued harassment and prosecution of opposition figures in the North, **six rounds** of high-level talks occurred in Nicosia between January and September, but by October Denктаş was too ill with heart disease to continue. Based on the talks to date, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented what became known as the first **Annan Plan** for a federal solution in mid-November. Turkish Cypriot opposition groups organized **massive rallies**, sometimes comprising over half the adult population of the North, in central Nicosia every month from November until February 2003, demanding a federal settlement and EU membership for the entire island. In February, Clerides unexpectedly lost the southern **presidential elections** to more hard-line DIKO chief Tassos Papadopoulos, and the prospects of success in negotiations seemed slimmer than ever. In March 2003 Denктаş rejected the Annan Plan’s third version, earning himself yet another censure from the Security Council.

Good Wednesday: barriers down

Denктаş’s (indirect) response was another bolt from the blue – the announcement, on April 23 during Orthodox Holy Week, a date subsequently dubbed “**Good Wednesday**”, of the **lifting of most restrictions on crossing the Green/Attila Line** in either direction. Some speculated that Turkey had had a word in his ear; others that it was a safety valve for accumulated popular misery in the North, permitting routine shopping and employment in the South which had hitherto been done clandestinely – and a bonanza for northern tourist enterprises who suddenly found themselves with new, Greek-Cypriot customers. Four official “border” points opened immediately, and thousands of islanders began crossing back and forth, with moving reunions a-plenty, visits to home villages, churches and mosques, and a general euphoria and conviction

that “people power” had left the politicians far behind. By late 2003, well over half of each community had been to the “other” side at least once, with almost none of the violence promised by ultra-nationalists in each camp.

The South, initially caught on the hop, eventually reciprocated with measures designed to facilitate trade and communications between the two parts of the island, and made it much easier for Turkish Cypriots to join professional organizations and get official paperwork done in the South. Turkey responded by allowing Greek Cypriots to visit that country for the first time in 29 years, though official Turkish recognition of the South was (and still is) not yet on the table.

Closer to home, Greek-Cypriots resented the necessity of showing passports (later just ID cards) at the barriers to travel as tourists into what they felt was their own country. Among visitors, some refused to spend a cent in the North, picnicking instead at the roadside; others ostentatiously patronized only Turkish-, Maronite- or Greek-Cypriot businesses, while snubbing settler-run enterprises. During 2003–2005, the North became established as a “**dirty weekend**” venue for some Greek Cypriots, where they go in their off-hours for anything – hookers, casinos, wild mushrooms or asparagus, pickled songbirds, oriental sweetmeats – that’s cheaper, better or more legal than at “home”. Since then, numbers of crossings from South to North have fallen sharply, as the novelty wore off and disillusionment set in.

Less frivolously, the breaching of the divide awoke the North from its long developmental slumber. Sensing that a definitive settlement might come sooner than later, and resolved to create facts on the ground, contractors commenced a **building boom** (see p.44) which shows little sign of abating, disfiguring much of the north coast and promising to reduce the aesthetic and ecological differences between North and South to nil.

2003–04: the end of Annan, the start of EU membership

Negotiations for the **accession of Cyprus to the European Union** (EU) proceeded in parallel with the UN-sponsored peace talks throughout 2002 and the first third of 2003. As part of the South’s decreased reliance on an UN-brokered settlement, membership of the EU had been vigorously pursued since the early 1990s as a way of forcing the issue: Europeanization versus Makarios’s old strategy of internationalization. Turkey would thus be occupying the territory of an EU member state, and denying universally accepted, pan-European rights of residence and commerce to its former Greek-Cypriot inhabitants. After considerable misgivings about inheriting an unsolved communal conflict, and the penetration of both economies by organized crime and money-laundering, the EU gave “Cyprus” a clean bill of health – and made it clear that, were there no final solution by May 1, 2004, the South alone would join along with nine other new candidates. Although this was intended as a warning to the Euro-phobe TRNC (who declined to send any official delegation to Brussels for negotiations, leaving it to opposition politicians and NGOs to talk to EU and mainland Greek officials), it had the effect of removing most incentives for the South to progress meaningfully towards reunification.

EU membership, confirmed by an accession treaty of April 16, 2003, had profound, perhaps unintended, consequences. As elsewhere, thousands of resident foreigners got voting rights in municipal and Euro-MP elections,

conceivably in numbers sufficient to decide habitually close polls, a tricky possibility on an island with a history of being bullied by powerful outsiders. This supposed catalyst to a federal solution still risks backfiring, as membership for the South alone may just consolidate the island's partition, with or without Turkey actually acting on its periodic threat to **annex the North** outright if Cyprus got into the EU, and Turkey didn't. This is less likely to happen since Turkey itself got a date to begin accession negotiations in December 2004; besides the tremendous international outcry which would follow formal annexation, Turkey would find its own entry negotiations abruptly halted. Before December 2004, the Turks viewed EU membership, for either the South alone or the entire island, as back-door *énoxis*, since Greece is a member and Turkey – for the immediate future – is not. By March 31, 2004, the **Annan Plan** had gone through five versions, most of the successive changes answering Turkey's (and Denктаş's) objections. Versions three and above contained the interesting provision, never before featured in UN plans, for Britain to cede half its SBA territory to any future federal republic (ninety percent of this, however, to the Greek-Cypriot entity). Other territorial adjustments (amounting to eight percent of the island's area) were as expected, with land – including Varósha, most of the Mórfou plain and large numbers of formerly Greek Cypriot villages on the Mesaória – returned to the South over a three-year period along a curiously shaped border allowing up to 100,000 refugees to go home. However the rest of the convoluted document, running to over a thousand pages, merely repeated many of the mistakes of the ill-fated 1960 Constitution and added some new ones (see p.410) manifestly contrary to the principles of both the UN and EU.

The UN compounded its errors by scheduling the **referendum on April 24, 2004**, just a week before EU accession, in the hope that a unified island would join. Even given that various versions had been under discussion since October 2003, it was a hopelessly abbreviated time to explain such a complex settlement, and neither government on the island displayed much interest in doing so. “NO” forces in the South quickly mobilized, while President Papadopoulos made an impassioned three-hour address on April 7 condemning the plan. “YES” advocates, including UN envoy Alvaro de Soto, were intimidated, accused of being *Tourkófilis* (Turk-lovers) and denied access to government media and private advertising, which were both put at the full disposal of the anti-Plan forces. Bishop Pavlos of Kyrenia threatened parishioners who voted “yes” with eternal damnation, while a fellow bishop stocked his fridge with champagne for a bash with his old EOKA mates in the likely event of the Plan's defeat. The only notable politicians to defend Annan were DISY cadres and ex-presidents Clerides and Vassiliou, and the only major newspaper to do so was *Politis*. International figures were resigned to defeat in the South, but hoped that the margin would be narrow enough so that the referendum could be soon resubmitted to the electorate, after minor tinkering. When AKEL – commanding nearly one-third of voters – joined the “no” camp on April 21, having failed to get the poll delayed, the Annan Plan was doomed to a **crushing defeat**. On the day, Greek Cypriots voted against it by a margin of 3:1, while Turkish Cypriots defied Denктаş and Turkish nationalist rent-a-mobs by favouring it by 2:1, but to no avail as both communities had to vote “yes”. Turnout was nearly identical on both sides (87–88 percent), so nobody could say the poll was unrepresentative.

Recriminations and post-mortems began at once. EU Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen accused President Papadopoulos of betrayal by pretending to accept the Annan Plan in principle but actively campaigning

against it. The EU warned that the North would be rewarded for its “yes” stance by direct “convergence” aid (259 million euros) – never actually delivered – and a possible end to its international embargo, leading to a Taiwan-ish status. South Cyprus alone entered the EU and went straight to the doghouse, while Turkey basked in the unaccustomed role of UN poster-child for its support of the plan. UN Secretary-General Annan expressed his regrets for the missed opportunity, reiterated that no “alternative” plan was available, and essentially washed his hands of the island until the Greek Cypriots had a change of heart.

Despite the conduct of the “NO” camp, it’s undisputable that there were fatal problems with the plan, and southern voters would likely have rejected it even if Papadopoulos and/or AKEL had backed it. **Reasons for a negative vote** were almost as numerous as Greek-Cypriot voters, but fell under the general categories of inadequate security guarantees, economic iniquities, and derogation from EU-wide human rights norms, with reservations about the viability of the proposed federal state and the status of mainland Turkish settlers important secondary considerations. Turkish-Cypriots approved Annan not least because they would have done conspicuously better out of it, compared to the South.

Most ominously, the Annan Plan retained the Treaty of Guarantee in toto, and required Cypriots to completely **disarm** themselves – including the South’s painstakingly prepared air defence systems – and accept indefinite stationing of up to six thousand Greek and Turkish troops on the island. Turkey would have been largely responsible for air traffic control, and could exercise a veto on exploration for undersea oil in the Karamanian Straits (offshore oil-drilling rights was also suspected as a factor in the UK’s retaining some base territory). The Plan also in effect required the South to subsidize the **costs** of remedying the consequences of Turkey’s 1974 intervention, a sum estimated at ten billion euros and, even allowing for some EU largesse, clearly beyond the capacity of the island’s total economy (the North’s is one-tenth the size of the South) now or in future. Neither Turkey, Greece, the UK or the US – all variously culpable for the situation – were asked to stump up any money to bring the North’s infrastructure up to scratch, or to create a slush fund to compensate refugee property-owners who can’t return home.

The Annan Plan **limited population resettlement** in either direction to three percent annually of the total refugee population in either community, thus stringing out the process of theoretical resettlement for up to twenty years – something which rankled on the Greek Cypriot side as a brazen opt-out from internationally accepted norms, but was designed to prevent Turkish Cypriots in the North from being swamped. Although the Greek Cypriots paid, and still pay, full lip service to freedom of movement, far more Turkish Cypriots would have come south to reclaim now-hyper-valuable property than the reverse process. Thus the **potential of losing** what one had gradually accumulated over three decades loomed large. Tourism bigwigs in the South would hardly welcome a massive shift of clientele to the manifestly superior beaches of the North. Greek Cypriots who had been given, or squatted, abandoned Turkish Cypriot properties in the South faced the prospect of the original owners reclaiming them, with no compensation for any improvements made during the interim, and naturally voted “no”. And as in the Turkish Cypriot community, there’s a significant minority of ultra-nationalists – perhaps four percent – who prefer to continue living separately.

Annan also allowed 45,000 Turkish **settlers** to remain, to compensate for the like number of native Turkish Cypriots who have left the island since 1974; Greek-Cypriot maximalists want most or all settlers to leave, but the

North admits that it “naturalized” 64,000 settlers up to 2003, who then voted in the 2004 referendum. An accurate, island-wide **census** should have been conducted before the poll, and will be mandatory before any new attempt. **Cross-voting**, whereby critical office-holders in the mooted federal republic would have to receive a majority of votes from both ethnic communities, was expressly ruled out by Denktaş during negotiations, so the civic arrangements of Annan merely reprised the disruptive tribalism of the 1960 Constitution. Moreover, it committed the new federal state to back Turkish entry to the EU in future, no matter how Turkey behaved meanwhile, thus depriving the Greek Cypriots of one of their major diplomatic levers for inducing the Turks to leave the North.

2005–08: Last Chance Saloon?

The hangover from the April 2004 fiasco lasted well into 2007, and what tentative settlement initiatives occurred were hostage to unusually volatile domestic politics in Turkey, who as ever will hold the key to approving any solution. The UN kept its head down except for a **July 8, 2006** meeting between Turkish–Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat and Papadopoulos, mediated by new UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari, which among the usual pious platitudes, agreed to set up seven bicomunal “**Technical Committees**” and six “**Working Groups**” to address the tough nuts-and-bolts issues of any peace agreement. Thanks in part to Papadopoulos’ foot-dragging, nothing was really done over the next 18 months, other than introducing a reduction in mandatory military service in both communities to 12 months, making significant progress in clearing both Greek–Cypriot minefields and the UN ones in the buffer zone – and UN’s **Committee for Missing Persons** reducing the number of post-1974 disappeared by the painstaking discovery and exhumation of many mass graves with over four hundred victims from both communities. Those with guilty consciences – either witnesses or perpetrators of atrocities – are finally speaking out, and it seems that a South–African-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission could, or should, be part of any settlement, replacing the partisan victims’ memorials which are the rule now.

Tassos Papadopoulos’ surprise first-round elimination from the South’s three-way February **2008 presidential contest** finally ended these doldrums. Within hours of his runoff victory, AKEL President Demetris Christofias affirmed his long-standing commitment to finding a solution, and quickly got in touch with Mehmet Ali Talat. The first tangible result of the thaw was the early April **opening of the Lídhras/Lokmaci crossing** in central Nicosia, long anticipated but long delayed by “technicalities” (including Turkish Army interference with UN minesweeping). After the technical committees and working groups made their final report in late July, the two leaders resumed face-to-face negotiations on September 3. Talat and Christofias, both notionally from the same side of the political spectrum, have long been on friendly terms, meeting clandestinely overseas during the bleakest years when Denktaş’s regime forbade such contacts.

Outlines of a settlement

Everyone involved privately admits that any settlement will resemble every UN plan presented since 1992. This means a “**United Cyprus Republic**”