

29. CYPRUS

Background

Cyprus, a Crown Colony of the United Kingdom since 1925, became an independent country in 1960. Under the 1960 agreements power was to be shared between the Greek majority (78 per cent of the population) and the Turkish minority (18 per cent). Britain retained two military bases on the island.

Fighting between the two communities broke out in 1963 when the Greek-Cypriot president of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios III, presented a memorandum to Turkish-Cypriot Vice President Kuchuk proposing constitutional changes to replace the existing power-sharing arrangements with a unitary state and majority rule. These proposals were rejected by Turkish-Cypriots, and fighting between the two communities erupted on 21 December. A United Nations force (UNFICYP) was created in 1964 to restore and maintain peace on the island. It remains in Cyprus today.

On 15 July 1974, units of the Greek-Cypriot National Guard, supported by the military régime in Athens and led by Greek officers, overthrew President Makarios in a bid to force enosis (union with Greece). Violence erupted between the National Guard and Makarios supporters in the Greek-Cypriot community, and opponents of the coup were imprisoned and/or executed. Fearing the annexation of the island by Greece, Turkish forces landed in Cyprus on 20 July and occupied the Nicosia-Kyrenia corridor, later extending their control over the northern forty per cent of the island after negotiations broke down in August 1974. The Turkish invasion and the intercommunal fighting that followed forced 150,000 - 200,000 Greek- and 60,000 Turkish-Cypriots to flee their homes and resettle in the de facto partitioned zones on the island. UNFICYP forces were subsequently redeployed to form a buffer zone between the two communities along the ceasefire line. The Turkish Federated States of Kibris was created shortly