

CHAPTER 09

**The 1974 coup and
the Turkish invasion**

George A. Kazamias

Aims

After studying this chapter, students should:

- Have a general overview of the events unfolding in Cyprus, between 15 July and the end of August 1974
- Be able to understand the military and political effects of the Athens Junta Coup for Cyprus, the Turkish invasion, and its consequences for the island.
- Be better equipped to understand the changes happening in Cyprus and on the Cyprus problem, described in subsequent chapters.

Keywords

- President Makarios
- Coup
- Sampson
- Invasion
- Nicosia airport
- Ceasefire
- Geneva Talks
- Geneva Declaration
- Geneva Talks (continuation)

The 1974 coup

Introduction

The 1974 coup and the two-part Turkish invasion that followed it are probably the two most important events in the post-independence history of Cyprus. Traumatic as they are, they serve as the cause of a radical reorientation of the Greek-Cypriot political life and the gradual creation of a party system that, in its general outline, has endured well into the 21st century. The two events are also the beginning of a long struggle for the formulation of a new solution to the Cyprus problem and are followed by a most remarkable and highly successful effort at economic reconstruction that has brought Cyprus “from rags to riches” and into the EU, within three decades of a major military, social and economic disaster.

Coup deposes President Makarios

The coup that began around 0800 hrs on the morning of 15 July apparently took President Makarios by surprise. Though some measure had been taken to ensure the security of the Presidential Palace (including disarming the National Guard Commando contingent that was the ceremonial guard at the Place), expectations for a full-blown daylight coup were apparently limited. Some of the National Guard camps where units expected to be used in a coup were indeed watched during the night, but the watchers were withdrawn before 0800 hrs.



The Presidential Palace
in ruins

The coup was largely successful. In the capital, stiff resistance was put up in the Presidential Palace, in the Archbishopric (the latter within the medieval walls Nicosia and within earshot of the Turkish quarter) and in the area of RIK (the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation) where the men belonging to the Police Tactical Reserve (*Efedriki Taktiki Monas* - a special unit best known as the *Efedriko*, composed of Makarios loyalists) had its quarters. Nonetheless, by the end of the day the Coup had prevailed in Nicosia. There were some further clashes between Makarios loyalists and the military during the following days, but they were limited. In Paphos, the long time heartland of support for Makarios, loyalists formed a column of vehicles and marched on Limassol. Despite some heavy fighting in the town itself, this force had to withdraw by 0600 on 16 July. By the end of the day on 16 July, the coup appeared to have largely established effective control of Cyprus. Nonetheless a National Guard task force was sent to Paphos to secure the area in the following days. Though no major fighting eventually took place, the movement of forces certainly had an effect on the National Guard dispositions and its capacity to undertake its main task, the defence of the island from external threats.

President Makarios escapes

One of the main aims of the coup was the physical elimination of President Makarios. Indeed, on 15 July, the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC – RIK) that had passed under the control of the military authorities announced that Makarios was dead. However, in this aim, the coup operations were singularly unsuccessful. Despite a strong attack on the Presidential Palace (an attack that was met with stiff resistance), the President escaped from a gully at the back of the Presidential Palace and managed to find temporary shelter in Nicosia, escaping almost immediately to Paphos; from there, later in the day, using the transmitter of Radio Paphos, he made his famous broadcast, announcing he was alive. Not long afterwards, with the active support of the British Government, he left Cyprus through the British Sovereign Bases, going to London (via Malta) and then to New York, where he addressed the UN Assembly. In his subsequent address, among others, he demolished the Greek Junta claims that the coup was an internal matter of the Greek Cypriot community, a reaction to Makarios to which it (the Junta) had no involvement; and denounced the duplicity of the Greek Junta towards himself. More controversially he repeatedly referred to the events as an invasion (“The coup of the Greek junta is an invasion, and from its consequences the whole people of Cyprus suffers, both Greeks and Turks”) and called on the Security Council to “put an end to the invasion and restore the violated independence of Cyprus and the democratic rights of the Cypriot people”. Part of these arguments were later fraudulently used as a pretext to justify its own actions.

Internal developments



Aftermath of the Coup

The escape of the Archbishop did not stop the coup organisers from appointing their own puppet regime. Failure to secure the cooperation of major figures in Cyprus, led the coup organisers to choose Nikos Sampson, a newspaper publisher and former EOKA hit man, and leader of irregular armed bands in the 1963-4 intercommunal clashes. The choice was highly ill-advised: in the subsequent days, though the Greek junta recognised his regime, the Turkish Government repeatedly refused to have anything to do with Sampson, ostensibly because of his role in the 1960s: for the Turks, Sampson was the “butcher of Omorphita”, a Nicosia mixed suburb that his supporters had captured. Despite their declared aversion to Makarios, it is quite possible that the Turkish side would have objected to anyone chosen to head the new “government”; nonetheless the singularly unsuitable choice of “President” by the coup leaders, made it easier for Turkey to denounce the developments and even claim (for a few days) that among its aims was the return of Cyprus to constitutional rule and the restoration of President Makarios.

The talks in London and the international scene

In the meantime, these developments could not fail to attract the attention of Turkey: actions in Cyprus had provided the ideal pretext for the long-planned invasion of Cyprus. Turkey denounced both the coup and the Sampson regime and approached Britain for concerted action of the two guarantor powers in order to restore the *status quo ante* in Cyprus. On 17 July 1974, Turkey and Britain held bilateral talks in London on action on Cyprus. This was a top level meeting (both Harold Wilson and Bulend Ecevit took part) between the British Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, the acting foreign minister of Turkey, Hasan Isik, another cabinet minister for each side, as well as a further 15 officials (7 British and 8 Turks, the latter group included two Army generals). According to Bulend Ecevit the minimum Turkish requirement in the future, whatever the status of Cyprus – independent or “whatever other arrangement” – would be to secure access to the sea somewhere near Turkey, which would enable his Government to prevent Turks from dying from starvation as had occurred in the past [TNA, FCO 9/1892, Military coup in Cyprus (Wednesday 17 July), “Record of Conversation between the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary”, p. 4].

The Turkish side asked for British cooperation to realise these aims, notably asking permission to use the British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) in Cyprus for a military intervention. Ecevit further argued that such cooperation would be an all round bonus (the Greek and Cypriot people included): it would justify British military presence in Cyprus, bring back NATO unity in the region and even return democracy to Greece. However, active cooperation with Turkey was too great a step for the British side, which offered instead to mediate and get Greece to the negotiating table. Turkey was at best indifferent to this offer.

What did Turkey secure in the London meeting of 17 July? As stated by the British record, in the course of the meeting

“The Prime Minister [Harold Wilson] said that he understood Mr Ecevit’s remarks as an expression of the Turkish wish that Britain would not blockade an action of the kind contemplated by Turkey, but that they would blockade the Greeks. Mr Ecevit asked if Britain would be ready to do so. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said it was not impossible.” [TNA, FCO 9/1892, Military coup in Cyprus (Wednesday 17 July), “Record of Conversation between the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary”, p. 12]

Though Britain did not promise help (neither did it later deliver a blockade for or against either side), for the Turkish side this was a clear victory: by its actions, the Colonels’ junta in Greece had sidelined Greece; through diplomacy Turkey had made sure that it would be the only one of the three guarantor powers with a credible pretext and a plan for action in Cyprus.

As far as the superpowers were concerned, a similar situation was developing. The Soviet Union was interested in the events in Cyprus purely as a secondary (or less) theatre in its general policy: a squabble among NATO allies (Greece and Turkey) was a useful tool; and despite former assurances to the contrary, Cyprus itself (and its constitutional status) was not a particularly important to the Eastern Block. Since there was no significant prospect of acquiring Cyprus (the US had made this

clear), the issue was nothing but a pawn in international politics. Though we cannot be certain of actual events until the former Soviet archives are made available to research, it appears that an understanding was reached between Turkey and the USSR, allowing Turkey a relatively free hand.

Likewise, across the Atlantic, with the Watergate crisis unravelling and the effective direction of foreign policy firmly in the hands of Henry Kissinger, there was little prospect of action –neither was there any active interest for action- other than diplomatic. In fact, a few days later (on 23 July) Kissinger told the British Ambassador in Washington that “he would like to procrastinate until he could see clearly how the forces were balanced” [TNA, FCO 9/1898, Washington to FCO tel. no. 2476, 23 July 1974]

Nonetheless, Joseph Sisco, a high ranking US diplomat, was sent by Kissinger to Greece and Turkey, in order to try to defuse the developing crisis. However, he was sent to intervene in the middle of a maelstrom of tension, with no effective means to bring about a solution. The US envoy kept shuttling between Athens and Ankara but was essentially sidelined by Turkey (though after the invasion he did help secure the ineffective ceasefire). In essence, the combination of all the above developments translated to an ‘all clear’ (or at least a tacit acquiescence by the powers that were) for Turkey to proceed with the invasion.

The Turkish invasion

The Turkish invasion begins

The Turkish invasion began on the early hours of the morning of 20 July. The invasion began with the bombing of targets in Cyprus by the Turkish Air Force, the reinforcement of the large Turkish-Cypriot enclave of Nicosia-Agirdha with airborne units and the (unopposed) landing of the first wave of Turkish troops on the beach of Pente Mili, west of Kyrenia.

The Turkish bombing raids were in some cases quite effective. The airborne units dropped in the enclave were mainly aimed at reinforcing it, so that it could link with the advancing invasion forces. The main effort was put on the landing, essentially abandoning the Turkish Cypriot enclaves in the south of the island.

As far as the Greek side is concerned, plans existed that had been carefully prepared and regularly updated exactly for the defence against a Turkish invasion; they were only partially put into effect.



Turkish troops landing in Pente Mili

The beach at Pente Mili, (along with other locations suitable for landing by a sea-borne invasion force) had been identified and static defences had been prepared long before 1974. However, just before the invasion, (e.g. when the invasion fleet was assembling in Turkish harbours or even when it sailed for Cyprus, in full coverage of the international media), no minefields were laid on the invasion beaches (including Pente Mili), nor was any other kind of obstacle erected; military units were put on alert (ostensibly as a precaution), but were not ordered

to move to the areas provided by the plans, even when it was clear that the bulk of the invasion fleet was moving towards Kyrenia or when it arrived a few miles off the northern coast of Cyprus, close to or actually in Cypriot territorial waters. No troops were waiting for the landing of the enemy forces; National Guard artillery units (e.g. in Kyrenia) did not open fire on the invasion fleet; and the prepared static defences were left unmanned.

Meetings of top military commanders did take place on 19 July, with no significant results; and there are instances of units that did leave their camps for their dispersal areas on the night of the 19th July (i.e. before the hostilities began), though more often than not this was done on the initiative of local commanders. A limited call-up of reservists was also ordered on 19 July.

Some of these failures are attributable to the disorganisation caused to the National Guard by the coup: indeed, units had been moved from their base areas for the needs created by the coup. On the whole, considerable gaps have yet to be filled before we can say that we have full understanding of the events.

It is difficult to explain the lateness with which the National Guard leadership gave the order to open fire on the Turkish Forces. Neither can we easily understand the persistence by which this same leadership kept explaining away the movement of Turkish forces as ‘military manoeuvres’, just before



Turkish propaganda poster celebrating the Mehmetcik

(or in some cases: after) the invasion: was this the result of over-reliance on the US, which had, after all sent Joseph Sisco to the region in order to avert the conflict? Or was there an underlying plan for the partition of Cyprus and the ‘solution’ of the Cyprus problem? It should be noted here that Bulend Ecevit, the Prime Minister of Turkey at the time of the invasion and some of his successors have consistently claimed that the invasion and occupation of Cyprus has effectively settled the Cyprus issue.

Scholarly research (as opposed to general publications, sometimes with an element of political bias) has, as yet, been inconclusive on this subject. The uncertainty is bound to remain until all relevant sources (including US, UK, Turkish and Greek such) have been made available to research.

The military situation in Cyprus

Conventional military wisdom has it that in any sea-borne operation the early stages are those when the bridgehead is at its most vulnerable. In Cyprus this was very much the case. Indeed the defence plans drawn up for Cyprus were taking this into account. Greece had earmarked Hellenic Air and Navy forces that were to strike at the landing fleet and the bridgehead. The National Guard had allocated units that would do the same on land. Indeed artillery units at the Kyrenia area were supposed to fire on the fleet as soon as it had entered the territorial waters of Cyprus.

The Turkish army on the other hand had to effect a successful landing; to hold and strengthen the bridgehead; to break out and cross the Kyrenia range, linking with the large Turkish enclave of Nicosia; and see what steps it could take to maintain the numerous other Turkish-held enclaves in Cyprus. The *ex-post facto* examination of the operations shows that the first three were indeed Turkish military priorities, on which the Turkish army concentrated its efforts. The enclaves, particularly those in the south of the island (but also the enclave in Lefka and the large and well-fortified enclave in the walled city of Famagusta) were largely left to fend for themselves.

On the Greek side, the general mobilisation ordered on 20 July, left much to be desired. As was the case with the general mobilisation also ordered in Greece at the time, there were organisational problems, occasional problems of supply and cases where reservists failed to turn up at all at their units. The mobilisation order broadcast on the radio stated that reservists were to present themselves to the unit nearest to their place of residence (rather than the unit they were allocated to) and this probably explains many of the problems. According to the plans, the Turkish-Cypriot enclaves were to be eliminated before the invasion began. However, manpower was used in the effort

to continue besieging and on attacks against the Turkish-Cypriot enclaves throughout the island. While this would eliminate the military threat at the rear of the National Guard, with hindsight it was probably a mistake.

It is true that this effort was largely successful: the Turkish-Cypriot enclaves in Larnaca, Limassol, Paphos and Lefka and many other smaller ones were mostly captured by 22 July. The enclave in Tzaos was partly occupied and even the Kioneli-Agirdha area, within the Nicosia enclave, was seriously threatened by a Greek forces attack (which, however, failed to capture it). The Famagusta enclave also came under strong pressure, but was not occupied. The few enclaves remaining after 22 July (including Kokkina on the north coast of Cyprus and Stavrokonnos in the Paphos area) were of no military significance.

The initial Turkish landing in Cyprus was unopposed. Fighting took place on 20 July and the Greek side mounted a major attack on the evening of 20 to 21 July; however, though it put significant pressure on the invading forces, the attack failed to limit their advance; the landing of the second wave and particularly armoured reinforcements tipped the scales significantly. Further attacks by Special Forces on the fortress of Agios Ilarion (in Turkish hands since 1964) and other sites of military significance were initially successful, but the Greek side failed to retain its initial gains.

Reinforcements from Greece and the Kocatepe incident - Nicosia Airport

According to the defence plans drawn up for Cyprus, Greece had to support Cyprus with air force and navy forces. In one of the confusing moves, two modern Hellenic Navy submarines had been ordered to the area of Cyprus before the invasion. However, despite some controversial reports, they never got within striking distance of the invasion fleet and were recalled before they could play any military role. The Greek side received reinforcements on two occasions during the conflict. The first was the result of initiative shown by a Hellenic Navy captain. Eleftherios Handrinis, the captain of *Lesvos*, a troop transport, had sailed from Famagusta harbour on the eve of the hostilities, carrying about 450 men of ELDYK (ΕΛΔΥΚ-Elliniki Dynami Kyprou, Greek army contingent stationed in Cyprus according to the Zurich and London Agreements and their annexes) that were due to be rotated home. On hearing news of the invasion on the ship's radio, Handrinis entered Paphos harbour, landed the men he was carrying and also used the cannon of the ship to help in the capture of Moutallos, the Turkish-Cypriot enclave in the town. News of the presence of Hellenic Navy ships in Paphos (transmitted to Turkey by the Turkish-Cypriot radio link in Moutalos) subsequently caused an intra-Turkish engagement: a Turkish Navy destroyer, the *Kocatepe*, part of a group of three looking for the Hellenic Navy, was sunk by a direct hit from Turkish Air Force planes (looking for the same target), that mistook it for a Greek navy vessel reputed to be in the area.

Limited reinforcements were also transported from Greece. On the night of 22 to 23 July 1974, a Hellenic special forces unit was flown to Cyprus in fifteen Hellenic Air Force transports that had assembled in Crete. Flying at a low altitude (500 feet above sea level) without navigation lights or

radio aids, 13 of the 15 planes reached Nicosia airport in the early hours of 23 July (the remaining three had to land in Rhodes or return home). However, bad communication with the forces stationed around the airport led to disaster. One of the planes was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed (32 of the 33 passengers and crew were killed); a second aircraft was also hit but managed to land, with a further 10 casualties (2 dead and 8 wounded). Two more planes were damaged and were destroyed on the ground later. The remaining 9 planes landed their cargo and returned safely to Greece. The special forces unit was subsequently used to defend Nicosia airport.

On the night of 21 July there was another abortive attempt to reinforce Cyprus from Greece. F/B *Rethymnos*, a fast civilian ferry was commandeered and embarked a Greek Infantry battalion, a company of medium tanks and about 500 Greek Cypriot volunteers (mainly students studying in Athens). On the night of 22 to 23 July, the ship was ordered to alter its course and go to Rhodes, for reasons as yet unclear (a possible explanation is that by then the armistice in Cyprus had already come into effect). On the other side of the conflict divide, Turkey kept sending a continuous stream of reinforcements to its bridgehead, not only during the fighting but throughout the period of the armistice through to the second phase of the operations in August.



Turkish airstrike against the
Nicosia Mental Hospital

A major area of conflict developed around the possession of the Nicosia airport. The Turkish side desperately wanted to gain this very important asset (in 1974 it was the only civilian airport in Cyprus) and put significant effort towards this end. On 23 July the Turkish army mounted a daytime attack against the Greek Forces holding the airport, which ended in complete failure. On the evening of the same day, the airport was handed over to the United Nations Forces; this fact notwithstanding, the mainland Turkish mass media announced the capture of the airport and local UN commanders were told the Turkish Army would move on the airport. After some contacts with the UN and a formal request for reinforcements, James Callaghan sent British Forces from the SBAs (24 July) to join the UN force in Nicosia airport.

As many of the UN forces in the Nicosia Airport were British or Canadian, and as Turkish threats against the airport continued, he was also ready to authorise airstrikes by 12 RAF Phantoms that had been sent from Britain (arriving in Cyprus in the early morning of 25 July), should they be required. In the course of a strongly worded telephone conversation on 24 July, Bulend Ecevit was told that Britain “would not stand by” if UN forces at the airport were attacked by the Turkish Army. For a few hours it appeared Britain and Turkey might go to war, but then Ankara backed down. A few years later (in a 1979 interview) Harold Wilson confirmed the events by stating that Britain and Turkey had been “within an hour of war” with each other. The airport has remained in UN hands since 1974.

Ceasefire

Efforts for a ceasefire had begun almost immediately after the invasion. An initial proposal for a ceasefire on 21 July proved abortive as Turkey refused to comply. Following intensive pressure from

all sides and the direct (through telephone diplomacy) involvement of the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, a formal armistice came into a effect on 22 July at 1400 GMT (1600 Cyprus time). The armistice's main aim was to stop the hostilities in Cyprus and thus avoid an all out war between Greece and Turkey, with all the concomitant problems for NATO's south-eastern flank.



Greek Cypriot POWs return home

The terms of the armistice were flawed (or favouring the Turkish side, depending on the individual viewpoints). The final document agreed did not stop the Turkish army from reinforcing its forces in Cyprus, a fact that essentially altered the balance of power on the island and defined future events. In any event, ceasefire or not, the Turkish Army continued its operations almost throughout the period between 22 July and the second round of the invasion.

Negotiations in Geneva (part I)

Following diplomatic pressure, negotiations started in Geneva on 25 July. The participants were the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan and Foreign Ministers of Greece, Georgios Mavros and Turkey, Turan Gunes. The main aim of the negotiations at this stage was to stabilise the situation in Cyprus, mainly by stopping the fighting; and to prepare the ground for a second round of negotiations that would work towards a new constitutional arrangement that would eventually replace the Constitution of 1960.

The Geneva Declaration

The Geneva Declaration was signed on 30 July 1974, by the three Foreign Ministers (Callaghan, Mavros and Gunes). It provided for a cessation of hostilities, a security zone (width to be determined) between the areas controlled by the opposing forces as of 30 July, the evacuation of the Turkish enclaves held by the National Guard, and prisoner exchange; and declared the readiness of the sides to reconvene on 8 August 1974 to discuss the new constitutional framework for post-invasion Cyprus. The Declaration was a temporary measure, of dubious effectiveness: large and small scale hostilities resumed almost before the ink had dried on the agreement; the situation in Cyprus was far from stabilised; and progress on most of the points agreed was at best slow.

According to the British record of the time, the UK government considered the outcome of the negotiation a success. However, it could only have been a success if both sides consistently abided by its letter and spirit. This would not prove to be the case.

The negotiations for the demarcation of the Ceasefire line

The terms of the Geneva Declaration provided for the demarcation of a ceasefire zone that would create a no-man's-land patrolled by the UN forces. The demarcation would be undertaken by a committee, made up of a Lt. Col. J. Hunter, a British officer, Maj. E. Tsolakis (Hellenic Army and National Guard) and Col. N. Cakar (Turkish Armed Forces). From the start it ran into trouble: the Turkish side delayed appointing its representative; the UN had difficulties providing the necessary support; the Turkish side contested almost every point and in some cases refused to allow local reconnaissance. Nonetheless the committee did make some progress, including reconnaissance on foot and by car and an aerial survey of part of the front. The latter proved quite embarrassing for the Turkish Army: landing in a point that, it was claimed, was behind the Turkish lines, the committee found a National Guard unit; a later search for (and landing in) another point proved elusive. Later Col. Cakar claimed that both areas were under Turkish control because they were within range of Turkish artillery fire.



Life at the refugee camps

The task of the committee was made more difficult by the small and large scale advances the Turkish Army continued to make. Sometimes these led to exchanges of fire in others to retreat by the Greek side. A notable incident on 2 August when a Turkish armoured detachment advanced on Greek positions led to the capture of an M47 tank and an M113 armoured personnel carrier and the destruction of another two armoured vehicles.

However, the large scale Turkish attack against the

towns of Lapithos and Karavas led to their occupation on 6 August 1974. During this period the demarcation exercise almost broke down (the Greek side threatened to leave because of the Turkish violations of the ceasefire) but eventually it appears that the need to have the second round of talks in Geneva (the demarcation of the confrontation line was thought an essential prerequisite for the continuing talks) was deemed more important. Turkish incursions notwithstanding, the committee did compile a map where parts of the line separating the two sides were agreed; in many other cases, the UN and the Greek side agreed, with the Turkish side proposing a different demarcation line.

The continuation of the Geneva negotiations (part II)

The negotiations resumed in Geneva on 8 August; this time, apart from the guarantor powers, Greek- and Turkish- Cypriot delegations also took part. Again, the chairmanship was entrusted to Britain, with James Callaghan taking a very active part. From the start there were problems (including matters such as the name cards for the two Cypriot delegations, an issue raised by Turkey); however, the most

important issue was the intransigence exhibited by the Turkish side: Turkey appeared determined to get a substantial chunk in the northern part of Cyprus, either through the negotiations, or by force. This at times brought Callaghan (as well as the UN Secretary General, Curt Waldheim) close to despair, leading him to intimate on one occasion that the UK and the UN were considering military measures in Cyprus, in order to check the expected Turkish military action. In this context, measures such as interposing UN (and UK) troops between the Greek and Turkish sides in Cyprus were briefly mooted. However, such plans could not be executed without the support of the US; and the US, firmly in the grip of the Watergate scandal and the Nixon resignation, was very reluctant (indeed unwilling) to agree to the use (or the threat of use) of force to stop Turkey. Indeed, according to the published US record, on 13 August he told President Gerald Ford on that “There is no American reason why the Turks should not have one-third of Cyprus”[Memorandum of conversation between President Ford, Henry Kissinger and Major General Brent Scowcroft, Washington, August 13, 1974, in Foreign Relations of the United States -FRUS, pp. 423-424]. This stance left no room for manoeuvre (and no ‘teeth’) to either Callaghan or Waldheim. US diplomatic pressure (the only kind of pressure the US was prepared to apply) led the Turkish side to propose the “Gunes Plan” (named after the Turkish Foreign Minister) which provided for an agreed division of Cyprus (it provided for a large Turkish canton in the north and several smaller ones in the south of the island), largely along the lines of the percentage division later enforced by Turkey.

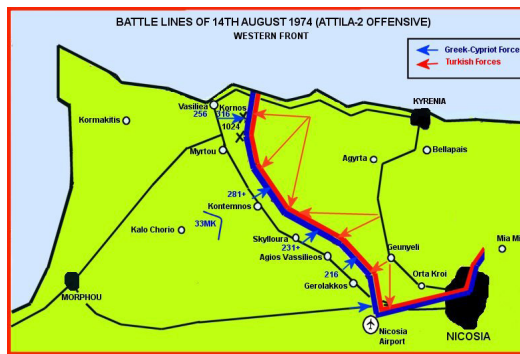
The collapse of the second round of talks

Despite desperate attempts to keep the negotiation alive, the crisis came on the early hours of 14 August 1974. Turkey had already moved very substantial military assets in Cyprus; despite a general mobilisation in the wake of the invasion, Greece (where the Junta had fallen and Constantine Karamanlis had become Prime Minister) was powerless to intervene in Cyprus, to counter the Turkish threat. No significant international reaction was on the air: the USSR was not offering any reaction and the US stance remained limited to diplomacy, imposing a similar role on the UK. In essence this amounted to another ‘all clear’ for Turkey to resume its operations. In the early hours of 14 August, Callaghan asked the delegations if they would be willing to resume negotiations after a 48 hour break; Greece and the Greek Cypriot Delegation accepted; Raouf Dentash, leader of the Turkish Cypriots replied he would come if Turkey came. Turan Gunes did not respond. By this time the codeword for the second phase of operations (“Aishe can go on holiday”) was already given; in Cyprus the engines of the Turkish tanks could be heard warming up.

The second phase of the invasion

The second phase of hostilities began on 14 August, with a major attack (including tanks) on the eastern part of the front, near Mia Milia. That section was defended by the Tasos Markou detachment, an assortment of infantry units with very limited anti tank capability. With no substantial heavy arms or armour backup, facing strong Turkish units and with the air dominated by the Turkish Air Force,

the struggle of the National Guard Forces in the area was heroic but doomed, almost from the beginning. The attack began in the early hours of the morning of the 14th. The front broke during the same morning, allowing the Turkish forces to advance in the Mesaoria plain, where the possibility of resistance was limited. The main axis of attack was eastwards, towards the town of Famagusta, with subsidiary axes towards the enclave of Tziaos and the airfield of Tymbou. The National Guard Forces deployed (the order applied for most parts of the front) were ordered to retreat, keeping contact with the enemy. In some instances the order was interpreted in a *sauve-qui-peut* spirit: some units retreated in panic, abandoning their positions. Others fought valiantly, in some cases with limited (generally: local) successes.



Operation Attilah II

the outcome of the struggle was foregone. In both fronts (and notably in the eastern sectors) the Turkish forces moved at leisurely pace. According to an interpretation, of the slow progress was pre-planned, so that fear of the Turkish Army (whose atrocities were relatively well known by this time) would drive away the Greek Cypriot inhabitants and help towards the ethnic cleansing of the occupied areas.

Advancing eastwards, the axis of advance of the Turkish forces led them to recapture the Tziaos Turkish Cypriot enclave (previously partially captured by the National Guard), by-passed the Kapasia Peninsula and occupied Famagusta, entering Varosha (the Greek quarters outside the old walled city) a full day after it had been evacuated by the National Guard. Similarly, on the eastern front, despite some delaying action by the National Guard, the whole area up to and including the enclave of Lefka was captured by 16 August.

Probably the heaviest fighting took place in the central part of the front, close to Nicosia, in the ELDYK camp and the western suburbs of the city. The ELDYK camp was captured only after heavy repeated and costly attacks, and was abandoned only when (in some cases) the Turkish tanks were literally on top of Greek positions and hand to hand fighting had ensued. In the same area, the effective defence preparation by the Greek side and spirited defence by the units assigned stopped the Turkish Forces from occupying the western suburbs of Nicosia and possibly surrounding the capital.

These and a few other instances apart, the general picture, was one of collapse. Some (mainly military) commentators note that it is quite unfortunate the National Guard forces do not seem to have taken advantage of the slow pace of advance, to prepare their defences and retain at least the Varosha area of Famagusta. Other critiques deplore the passivity of the Greek side; or the underemployment of the

The secondary axis of the attack was to the west, towards the town of Morphou and the Turkish-Cypriot enclave of Lefka (captured by the National Guard early on in the invasion). The same conditions prevailed in the western part of the front: as in the east: despite local successes (such as an armour engagement where the two captured Turkish armoured vehicles faced around a dozen of their former comrades, caused damage to several, delayed their advance and lived to tell the story)

special forces units (the *Lokadjides*) who appear to have retained their cohesion and fighting spirit (as shown in an incident in the village of Piroi, just after the armistice). In some cases, units ordered to withdraw keeping contact with the enemy dissolved in panic and ended up in the south of the island. On the whole, Turkish forces advanced facing limited (or no) resistance and occupied both their strategic and tactical targets. On 16 August a general ceasefire came into effect, on the ragged line where the Turkish Forces stopped.

The consequences of the invasion

The invasion led to the occupation of over 36% of the territory of Cyprus, a part that included substantial economic resources: 65% of hotels, over half the mineral production of the island, 46% of industrial plant (which in 1974 employed 32% of the workforce) over 40% of livestock and almost half the agricultural production. This last category included 79% of the citrus fruit production, an important export in pre-1974 Cyprus and 68% of wheat crops. Famagusta harbour (the most important harbour of Cyprus) and the smaller harbours of Kyrenia and Karavostasi, as well as the Nicosia Airport were also lost, along with 31% of Primary School and 49% of Secondary School buildings.

A well publicized consequence of the invasion is the systematic pillaging of Greek properties private and public, including cultural heritage: churches were sold or converted to other uses and movable (and in some cases immovable) art objects were sold at auctions in Europe and the US. The repeated repatriations of religious icons as well as the well known instance of the Kanakaria mosaics are such examples.

However, much more important are the effects on the population of Cyprus. Large numbers (estimated at 180.000) of Greek Cypriots were displaced from their homes, in 1974 or in the years that followed, in a systematic ethnic cleansing operation; the Turkish Cypriot population living in the south of Cyprus was also forced by its leadership and by intense pressure by Turkey to abandon their homes and move to the North of the island. Populations from Turkey were also encouraged to move to Northern Cyprus, altering the demographics. The war dead and the missing persons (now numbering approximately 1400, following DNA testing of remains dug up from mass graves) are an open wound in the collective Cypriot psyche, as are the memories of rapes, murders and massacres of the time. A wave of emigration followed, spreading Cypriots far and wide, in search of a livelihood, for shorter or longer periods. The Cypriot economic miracle that followed, with the re-settlement of the displaced population and the restarting and development of the Cypriot economy were very successful in raising the standard of living to Western European standards; they have certainly not closed the wounds caused by the events of 1974.

Appendix

Note on sources

Bibliography on the coup and the invasion is relatively plentiful, particularly in Greek and to a lesser extent in English; only a small selection is presented here, with no claims to a full presentation of all the material available.

However, the character of the publications is varied. Accounts of the coup and invasion are related (in more or less detail) in most general histories of Cyprus published post 1974, both in English and in Greek. Notable early examples of such accounts in English are Stavros Panteli, *A New History of Cyprus*, London, East-West Publications, 1984, Costas Kyrris, *History of Cyprus*, Nicosia (Nicosia), 1985 and the more recent William Mallinson, *A Modern History of Cyprus*, London, Tauris, 2005.

An interesting part of the bibliography are the histories of units of the Greek Cypriot National Guard (virtually all in Greek) and memoirs of participants, both politicians and armed forces officers, relating part or all of the period under consideration, both in Greece and in Cyprus. The military aspects are further explored in Brig. Francis Henn, *A Business of Some Heat, The United Nations Force in Cyprus before and after the 1974 Turkish Invasion*, Barnsley, S. Yorks Pen and Sword Military 2004; this is a very interesting account of (mainly military) developments in 1974-74 Cyprus, by a British UN officer; Clay Beattie (with Micheal S. Baxendale), *The Bulletproof Flag, How a small UN Force changed the concept of peacekeeping forever*, Maxville, Ottawa, Optimum Publishing International 2007, gives a less global (but no less interesting) account of the invasion, again through UN eyes (he was a Canadian officer of the UNFICYP).

Of wider recent scholarly publications one should mention Jan Asmussen, *Cyprus at War, Diplomacy and Conflict during the 1974 Crisis*, London and New York, Tauris, 2008, is based mainly on the British (and US record); the US record is also used by James Edward Miller, *The United States and the Making of Modern Greece: History and Power, 1950-1974*, Chapel Hill, N.C. The University of North Carolina Press 2008, which, disappointingly only devotes a relatively limited space to the coup and the invasion. A more recent work is by Andreas Constandinos, *America, Britain and the Cyprus Crisis of 1974*, Milton Keynes Author-House, 2009.

Primary sources on Cyprus (both US and UK) may be consulted in electronic form in the internet [request]. Limited UK material is available electronically by the UK National Archives [<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>] -a wealth of information awaits those that consult the UK sources in person. A fuller (but by no means complete) version of the British (and the US) Record are available in <http://dbpo.chadwyck.co.uk/home.do> and <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com/home.do> respectively (some material by subscription only). The volume by Laurie Van Hook (ed.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. XXX: *Greece; Cyprus; Turkey, 1973-76*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 2007, gives a part of the US record (the whole volume was made available on line in <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30> , in pdf format. Sources on the events are also available from the National Archives of Australia [<http://www.naa.gov.au/>] which

has a lot of digitised material available on line.

Memoirs by protagonists have been published over the years: Kurt Waldheim, *In the eye of the storm : the memoirs of Kurt Waldheim*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1985; Brian Urquhart, *A life in peace and war*, London Weidenfeld & Nicolson, c1987; Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, London Phoenix, 2000; and his *Years of Renewal*, London Phoenix Press, 2000; James Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, London Collins, 1987; Glafkos Clerides, *Η Κατάθεσή μου*, [My Deposition], Nicosia Alitheia Publishers, 1991, available in both Greek and English. All have at least a few pages on the Cyprus crisis.

Accounts and assorted information coming from individuals is increasingly becoming available once more (there was a considerable amount of material in the years immediately after the invasion, which became a trickle later on) in Greek, through publications newspapers and magazines, either on the anniversary of the events (in July and August) or on other occasions.

Scholarly papers in conferences or journals are also available, including work by the author [the paper G. Kazamias, "From Pragmatism to Idealism to Failure: Britain in the Cyprus crisis of 1974", London School of Economics, Hellenic Observatory, *GreeSE (Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe)*, paper no. 42, pp. 1-48, December 2010 is available in http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/31090/1/GreeSE_No42.pdf as is the paper G. Kazamias, " 'Some sort of an agreed line': The negotiations for the ceasefire demarcation line, 30 July- 9 August 1974", in E. Close, G. Gouvalis, G. Frazis, M. Palaktsoglou, M. Tsianikas, (eds.) *Greek Research in Australia, Proceedings of the 6th Biennial Conference of Greek Studies, Proceedings of the 7th Biennial Conference of Greek Studies*, Adelaide (Australia), 2009 available in http://dspace.flinders.edu.au/jspui/bitstream/2328/8084/1/273-282_Kazamias.pdf].

Research is hampered from the lack of access to both Greek and Turkish state archives (both generally closed as regards the events in Cyprus) and by the language divide: work in Greek is not generally available to Turkish speakers and *vice versa*. The best known books from the Turkish side are the two by the Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand, *30 Hot Days*, London, K. Rustem & Brother, 1985; translated into Greek as *Apofasi-Apovasi*, Athens, Ioannis Floros, 1985; and Mehmet Ali Birand, *Pazaremata*, Athens, Ioannis Floros, 1985.

Lastly, the internet may be a rich source of information, but is also a battleground between different viewpoints; this makes it a minefield, where facts, fiction and anything in between are freely presented as history. In some cases valuable information is freely mixed with unfounded allegations. An example is the webpage <http://www.cypnet.co.uk/ncyprus/history/republic/makarios-speech.html>, where the full text address of President Makarios to the UN (including a sound version!) is offered to the reader alongside references to "more than 3000 Greek Cypriot supporters of Makarios and supporters of the Communist party AKEL" allegedly killed in the coup (another webpage, <http://www.btinternet.com/~cy74/inv.htm> lowers the Greek Cypriot dead to 2000 persons); the first site further alleges that the (: long defunct by 1974) "Akritas Plan" "was put into effect to exterminate Turkish Cypriot people". Though atrocities did take place (on both sides of the divide), references to organised genocide of the Turkish Cypriots are unfounded. Unfortunately, the same does not apply to the ethnic cleansing programme applied by the Turkish side to the occupied areas.