

## THE STANCE OF THE THREE GUARANTOR COUNTRIES, THE TWO SUPERPOWERS AND THE UN DURING THE 1974 CYPRUS CRISIS AND THE AFTERMATH

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### Introduction

The coup by the Greek Junta against President Makarios on July 15, 1974, gave Turkey a unique opportunity to invade Cyprus on July 20, 1974. The USA did not condemn the coup, nor did it prevent the Turkish invasion. The primary goal of the USA was to avoid a Greek-Turkish war. Britain failed to fulfill its obligations as a guarantor power. With the fall of the Junta and the return of Konstantinos Karamanlis, it became clear that Greece would not react to the developments in Cyprus either.

The UN Security Council never condemned the Turkish invasion and the ongoing occupation in Cyprus. The Cyprus problem is still viewed today as a bicomunal dispute. Given the circumstances and all relevant developments from 1974 to today, the Greek Cypriot side must reassess its policy on the Cyprus question. We should be reminded that the Cyprus problem has several dimensions: bicomunal, Greco-Turkish, European, international and geopolitical. The bicomunal dimension is not the most important one although it is treated as such.

### I. The Guarantor Powers

#### Greece

During the Junta period, there was constant undermining of President Makarios. Tensions in the relations between Athens and Nicosia existed from time to time even before the Junta. It is noted that around mid-1973, relations between the Junta leader Papadopoulos and President Makarios improved. However, with the overthrow of Georgios Papadopoulos by Dimitrios Ioannidis on November 25, 1973, the situation drastically changed.

On July 15, 1974, Ioannidis overthrew President Makarios. Turkey invaded on July 20 and Greece did not react. There were some calls to respond to Turkey militarily, but ultimately Athens remained inactive. The Junta collapsed, and Konstantinos Karamanlis returned to Greece in the early hours of July 24, taking over the governance of the country. There was tolerance of the Turkish aggression and acceptance of most of Turkish positions. On July 30, the three guarantor powers agreed in principle that two autonomous administrations existed in Cyprus.

On August 9, when the second phase of talks in Geneva began, the atmosphere was heavy and the forecasts were bleak. Regarding Greece's stance, there were different views between Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis and Foreign Minister Georgios Mavros. With the start of the second Turkish offensive (Attila II) on August 14, Greece again remained inactive. In his August 15 address, Karamanlis explained why Greece could not intervene militarily. Athens adapted to the new realities.

During the meeting of mainland Greek and Greek Cypriot leaders in Athens on November 30 and December 1, 1974, it was decided to accept federation, in principle, although its implications were not fully understood.

## **Turkey**

Turkey had been preparing for an invasion since the 1960s. Ankara believed that the opportunity would eventually arise. The creation and support of Turkish Cypriot enclaves were part of Turkey's plans. After the withdrawal of the Greek division in late 1967, Cyprus' defense weakened. Despite the intercommunal talks based on a unitary state, the Turkish side occasionally proposed ideas of geographical division and federation. This was also advocated by the newly elected Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit in January 1974. However, it should also be noted that the destabilization in Cyprus and the ongoing tensions between Athens and Nicosia, especially after the rise of the Junta II under Ioannides on November 25, 1973, facilitated the Turkish plans.

In 1964 and 1967, Turkey threatened to invade, but following the USA interventions, it did not carry out its plans. Turkey closely monitored the situation in Cyprus and the stance of Athens. With Ioannidis' rise to power on November 25, 1973, it was only a matter of time before a coup against Makarios occurred. Immediately after July 15, 1974, Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit saw a unique opportunity. Ecevit made tactical moves and statements, but the decision had already been made.

Turkey's narrative on July 20 referred to a "peace operation to restore the constitutional order and protect the Turkish Cypriot community." On July 23, following the resignation of the Putschist President Nicos Sampson, Acting President Glafkos Clerides proposed to the Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash the reinstatement of the 1960 Constitution. The Turkish response was that: "it is too late." Turkey's stance was aggressive and arrogant, violating all principles. During the Geneva conference from August 9 to 13, the Turkish side was maximalist and confrontational. From August 14 to 16, 1974, the second phase of the Attila operation took place with the well-known results.

## **Britain**

Before the coup, Britain supported the process of the intercommunal talks and a unitary state. With the onset of the coup, Britain played a crucial role in helping President Makarios to leave Cyprus. On July 18, 1974, the Prime Ministers of Britain and Turkey met in the British capital. London refused joint action with Ankara but showed tolerance for the Turkish invasion. With the new circumstances, there was a shift in Britain's stance—from a unitary state to a biregional, bicommunal federation.

Britain did not fulfill its obligations under the Zurich and London Agreements as a guarantor power. Britain believed it could only intervene militarily in cooperation with the USA. Nor did it show a willingness to cooperate with the new government of Greece after the collapse of the Junta to limit the damage to Cyprus. After the end of Turkish operations, London adapted to the new realities. There were systematic efforts to persuade Greek Cypriots to demonstrate "realism."

## **II. The Stance of the Two Superpowers**

### **USA**

Overtime, the USA did not view President Makarios positively. During the 1960s, there were plans and suggestions for double enosis (partition of Cyprus between Greece and Turkey). It is noted that the USA did not condemn the Junta's coup against President Makarios. It can also be argued that the USA could have prevented it but did not. Some authors place much greater blame on the USA for the events of 1974.

Once the coup occurred and Turkey had decided to invade, the USA's goal was to prevent Greece from getting involved and to avoid a Greek-Turkish war. This goal was achieved at the expense of Cyprus. USA Secretary of State Henry Kissinger predicted the fall of the Junta and the restoration of democracy in Greece shortly after the ceasefire agreement on July 22, 1974. Those who overthrew Makarios, giving Turkey a unique opportunity for invasion, were no longer necessary.

During the critical moments, the USA eliminated any chances of Greek involvement. Furthermore, the USA did not cooperate militarily with Britain to limit the damage in Cyprus. It is noted that on August 16, at 9:00 AM in Washington (4:00 PM in Cyprus) USA Defense Secretary James Schlesinger stated that Turkish forces had advanced "beyond what they were expected to." Shortly after, a ceasefire agreement was announced.

The USA could have prevented the second Attila operation and promoted a tolerable settlement. Instead, Kissinger believed that if Turkey captured one-third of Cyprus before any talks, USA interests would not be negatively affected.

Kissinger did not want Makarios to return to Cyprus. He believed that with Clerides at the helm, a settlement on the basis of a biregional, bicommunal federation could be reached. When Clerides spoke at the Argo Gallery in early November 1974 about a biregional, bicommunal federation, it was with the encouragement of the

USA, Britain, Germany and Greece. To this day, the USA has tolerated the Turkish occupation.

### **Soviet Union**

The stance of Moscow was in favor of the independence of the Republic of Cyprus and against enosis or double enosis. Moreover, Moscow was in favor of Cyprus' neutrality.

The Soviet Union strongly condemned the Junta's coup. However, its stance on the Turkish invasion was lukewarm. The deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations and the risk of a military confrontation between them did not concern the Soviet Union; on the contrary, problems in NATO's southeastern flank benefited Moscow.

After the destruction, the Security Council referred again to intercommunal talks. The Soviet Union supported the Republic of Cyprus within this specific framework. However, there was no significant problem between the relations of Moscow and Ankara resulting from the Turkish invasion and occupation of the northern part of Cyprus. Makarios had higher expectations from the Soviet Union and he was disappointed. Nonetheless, despite the responsibilities of the USA and the West in general, he was ready for any cooperation within Western frameworks to find a tolerable solution for Cyprus in the aftermath of the destruction.

When Makarios returned to Cyprus, a large portion of the public demanded: "Makarios should visit Moscow." The Cypriot leader's response was: "I will go to Moscow and even to the Underworld if necessary for the salvation of Cyprus."

### **III. The UN's Stance**

The UN supported the basis for intercommunal Cypriot talks on the Cyprus issue before the coup and the invasion—a unitary state. At the same time, UN officials consistently expressed their dissatisfaction with the prevailing internal instability. Nevertheless, there was a widespread belief that a settlement would eventually be reached based on a unitary state. When the coup occurred, UN and British Base officials helped Makarios to leave Cyprus.

On July 20, 1974, Security Council Resolution 353 was unanimously adopted. The resolution called for:

- "The withdrawal of foreign troops not provided for by the Agreements, including those referred to in Makarios' letter to Gizikis.
- Respect for Cyprus' independence.
- It calls on the guarantor powers to negotiate 'for the restoration of peace in the region and the constitutional government of Cyprus.'"

On July 23, 1974, Security Council Resolution 354 was unanimously adopted:

- "Reaffirming Resolution 353 (with 12 in favor, the USSR and Belarus abstaining, and China not participating in the vote), it calls for respect for the ceasefire and restraint."

On August 1, 1974, Resolution 355 was adopted:

- "Respect for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Cyprus.
- The ceasefire is the first step."

On August 14, 1974, Security Council Resolution 357 was unanimously adopted:

- "Condemns the resumption of hostilities.
- Calls for a ceasefire.
- Negotiations in accordance with Resolution 353."

On August 15, 1974, Resolution 358 condemned the fact that members of the Peacekeeping Force had been killed or wounded.

On August 16, 1974, Resolution 360 was adopted (with 11 votes in favor, Belarus, Iraq and the USSR abstaining, while China did not participate):

- "It registers its formal disapproval of the unilateral actions taken against the Republic of Cyprus.
- It urges negotiations based on Resolution 353."

On August 30, 1974, Resolution 361 was unanimously adopted:

- "Expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for his role in conducting talks between the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus.
- Humanitarian aid.
- Continuation of talks."

On December 13, 1974, Resolution 364 was unanimously adopted (China did not participate):

- "Extension of UNFICYP.
- Notes the importance of General Assembly Resolution 3212, titled 'The Question of Cyprus,' which was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly on November 1, 1974."

On December 13, 1974, Resolution 365 was adopted by consensus:

- "Emphasizes the importance of Resolution 3212."

On March 12, 1975, Resolution 367 was approved (China did not participate in the vote):

- "Expresses regret over the unilateral decision to proclaim the 'Federated Turkish State' on February 13.
- Reaffirms previous resolutions.
- Calls for talks between representatives of the two communities."

In none of the Security Council resolutions is Turkey named as the responsible party. Gradually, the UN adapted to the new reality. This was also facilitated by concessions from the Greek Cypriot side.

Another interesting and relevant issue is the evaluation of the Plans and Ideas later submitted by the UN:

- Cuéllar Indicators

- Ghali Set of Ideas
- Annan Plan
- Guterres Framework

#### **IV. Conclusions**

In the summer of 1974, Cyprus was betrayed and left alone. Since then, there has been a gradual worsening in the positions for the Cyprus problem. This was not only the result of a power imbalance – it was also due to mistakes and omissions on the part of the Greek Cypriot side. The cost of having no narrative and not utilizing specialized expertise in the decision-making process and policy formulation has been, and continues to be, disproportionately high.