Republic of Cyprus

As a result of the Zurich-London Agreements, Cyprus became an independent Republic on 16 August 1960. The 1960 Constitution incorporated a system of entrenched community rights for Turkish Cypriots unparalleled in any other country and a heavy inefficient bi-communal structure. In November 1963, Cyprus’ first elected President, Archbishop Makarios III put forward proposals for amendment to the constitution in order to improve the functionality of the state. Turkey and the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community outrightly rejected the proposal.

As a consequence of the ensuing standoff, the Turkish Cypriot Ministers withdrew from the Council of Ministers, and Turkish Cypriot civil servants ceased attending their offices. The deadlock gave rise to intercommunal clashes and threats on the part of Turkey to invade Cyprus. The Government of Cyprus appealed to the UN Security Council, which confirmed the sovereignty and legality of the Republic of Cyprus and its government, sent a Peace Keeping Force (UNFICYP) to help, inter alia, restore law and order and put in motion a process for a peaceful settlement.

Intercommunal strife subsided relatively quickly and the Cyprus government at the time made all efforts to restore the situation to normality. In 1968 the government initiated intercommunal talks with the Turkish Cypriot leadership under UN auspices for a negotiated agreement on a more functional constitutional system for Cyprus. By 1974 significant progress was achieved through the intercommunal talks but developments that summer interrupted the process, with devastating consequences for the island.