

SYMPOSIUM 60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROC 18/11/2020 – WELCOME
ADDRESS

Judge George Arestis (ret'd)

Dear Speakers

Dear Participants,

After a four-year armed struggle fought by the Greek Cypriot majority in order to get rid of the colonial rule and achieve “Enosis” with Greece, Cyprus became independent in 1960.

The Turkish Cypriot minority was not only against the idea of Enosis but it collaborated with the colonial government against the Greek Cypriot struggle aspiring at the same time to the idea of partition. Independence, therefore, was the result of a compromise to avoid both Enosis and partition. The constitution on which the new state was established reflected this bitter compromise. It was a constitution imposed on the Cypriots by the three guarantor powers and not approved by the people. The seeds of the division were already entrenched in the constitution. In spite of the fact that a system of cheques and balances was established in order to protect the rights and freedoms of each community vis-à-vis the other community, it was more than clear that this system was an unbalanced one favoring rather the Turkish minority.

The unbalanced divisionist elements of the constitution rendered the functioning of the government extremely difficult and the independence of the country very fragile. In addition, the two treaties, that of guarantee and that of alliance facilitated those favoring the abolition of independence. It was then not of a surprise that less than three years after independence, intercommunal conflict spread all over the island and dominated the lives of the Cypriots. The state of Cyprus came to the verge of collapse. Ten years later, Turkey invaded the island and achieved the de facto partition of the island, aiming in fact at the de jure partition or even at the domination of the whole of the island through

the negotiations for a solution which have been going on for more than 46 years, relying at the same time on the military advantages she gained by the invasion and occupation of 36% of the island's territory.

To the above we should add the right of the UK to preserve in Cyprus two Sovereign Bases in the south of the island rendering in practice the state of Cyprus enclaved between the Turkish occupied area in the north and the British sovereign bases in the south. A marvelous sandwich as I some times like to say turning into a joke the tragic situation of our country.

A number of inevitable question then arise

-Why the armed struggle for Enosis

-What made impossible the avoidance of the divisionist elements of the constitution?

-Could the UK play over the years a more constructive role as the former colonial power and in particular as the neutral guarantor power? Has it exercised its obligations to protect Cyprus independence?

-What are the prospects for the survival of Cyprus as an independent state?

I hope that some at least of these questions will find their answers in the presentations of our today's eminent speakers.