

Greek survivors feel the squeeze

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IN THE north Cypriot village of Dipkarpaz, 15 miles from the tip of the Karpaz panhandle that juts eastward towards Syria, two old men are enjoying a chat and their usual morning game of cards in the Greek coffee shop.

Andreas Chrysostomou, a Greek Cypriot who was born in the village, and his friend Ali Telci, from Kutahya in western Turkey, seem to typify a way of life that disappeared from the divided island more than 20 years ago.

But their friendly smiling

slow process of ethnic cleansing.

This remote village of 3,000 inhabitants is the largest in the region, which was predominantly Greek before the Turkish army invasion of 1974. The panhandle now consists of small farming villages settled by Turks, mainly from eastern Anatolia, as well as goatherds and feral donkeys made redundant by the tractor.

Although the army bypassed the Karpaz, only about 450 Greek Cypriots remain, of whom 300 live in Dipkarpaz.

Like many people born in

He made the mistake, he says with a wry smile, of coming back in December 1973, a few months before the war.

He is bitter about what he calls his miserable life, but refuses to leave his home to join his family in the south. "The trouble is the government is taking our property and giving it to the mainlanders. For example, if my cousin dies, his property goes to the Turks and we are given no money.

"Most of the people here are old. We have a primary school, but the young people have to go south for secondary education. Naturally everyone here feels like death. But even if I wanted to go south, I'm too old now to find a job."

It is a grim life for these minority people who survive on handouts from the south. They receive a pension of £127 each a month (£190 for a married couple) and every Wednesday the United Nations peacekeeping corps delivers food, cooking oil and other essentials.

Although the Greeks are allowed to travel south to visit their relatives, they must give the authorities three days' notice and are driven to the border crossing in Nicosia by the UN.

Another indignity is sharing their village with the mainland Turks. A huge

Faiths trade goodwill gestures

HUNDREDS of Turkish Cypriots crossed the barbed wire dividing Cyprus on Saturday for their first pilgrimage to a mosque in southern Cyprus since the Turkish invasion of the north in 1974.

About 430 took part in the visit to the Hala Sultan mosque near Larnaca. They were marking the Muslim celebration of Eid al-Adha, on a day trip organised by the Cypriot government as a goodwill gesture.

mosque, built two years ago, overshadows the 18th-century Orthodox church of Saint Sinassios. Worshipers leaving the Sunday service are met by the stern gaze of Ataturk, from a bust across the road.

Mr Chrysostomou, who talks to Mr Telci in a mixture of Greek and Turkish, dislikes the young people in particular. "They steal our money and whatever they can find. They also steal from the church."

He is cynical about the police, who seem suspicious of anyone talking to the Greek Cypriots — although it is difficult to see what threat these old people pose. "They don't look after us, they look after our money," he says

In another first, a similar number of Greek Cypriots are due to visit the Apostolos Andreas monastery on the north-eastern tip of the island this week to celebrate the Greek Orthodox Easter.

Meanwhile the UN, which is pushing for direct talks between the two sides to resume this summer, has named Diego Cordovez, a former Ecuadorean foreign minister, as its new special representative for Cyprus. — Reuter.

guardedly, glancing at a policeman sitting near the door.

Zacharias Ktoris, aged 77, is one of a group of shabbily dressed elderly men listening to Greek radio at a table beside the wall, underneath a picture of Rauf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, and the ubiquitous Ataturk. He is even angrier about the Turkish presence.

"This village doesn't belong to Turkey, but they are kicking us out," he says, gesturing across the road where clusters of young army conscripts are gathering in the Turkish coffee shop.

"We are afraid to speak and tell the truth. But the truth is

that nobody wants the situation here. But if we say anything they'll probably kill us.

"We look forward to a settlement of the Cyprus problem. If they really want a settlement, America and Britain can do it. If they leave it to Turkey and Greece, they'll never do it," he says bitterly.

The former pilgrimage centre of the Apostolos Andreas monastery is 10 miles away, almost at the tip of the panhandle. The road, lined with yellow gorse, runs through wooded hills and olive groves to the coast, with its miles of spectacular empty beaches.

British and German tourists are about the only visitors to the monastery these days. Mr Ktoris has not been since 1974. "Why should I go there," he says with disgust, pointing out that he, like all other visitors, would have to check in at the police post at the gate, where two bored officers log names, car registrations and arrival times.

Before 1974, Turkish and Greek Cypriot pilgrims came to take the waters of the apostle's well, said to cure epilepsy, paralysis and blindness.

The water still flows below a stone cover in the tiny 15th-century chapel underneath the main church, but the Greek Cypriots have long given up hope that even a miracle can save them.