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## British Security: Confronting the Communist and the Nationalist Threat in Cyprus, 1920-1955

Dr. ALEXIOS ALECOU

Visiting Fellow

Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London

United Kingdom

Open University of Cyprus, Nicosia

Cyprus

Dr. ANDREAS KAPARDIS

Professor

Department of Law

University of Cyprus, Nicosia

Cyprus

### Abstract:

*The paper first provides an account of the rise by the 1920's of the Greek-Cypriot cause for enosis (union with Greece) and details the establishment of the Cyprus Communist Party and the British Administration's response to it. Attention then focuses on the oppressive measures used by the British in dealing with the communist threat through the 1930's and 1940's as the Cypriot communist movement continued to get organised, culminating in the establishment of AKEL (Working People's Progressive Party) in 1941. The paper then goes on to consider the evolution of and the relationship between the communist party and the nationalist movement against the backdrop of the Greek civil war in the late 1940's as well as how the British continued to deal with both the Left and the Right as the armed rebellion by the Greek-Cypriot right wing EOKA guerrilla organisation under the leadership of staunch anti-communist Grivas broke out in 1955. Finally, the involvement of the British secret services in the colonial fight against EOKA and the communist threat is also considered.*

**Key words:** *Britain, Cyprus, Colonialism, communism, nationalism*

## **Introduction: the security service and the threat of communism in Britain**

Formed by the merger of a various smaller Marxist parties in Britain, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was founded in 1920 after the *Third International*<sup>1</sup> and was refounded in 1921 after the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International)<sup>2</sup> and the Scottish Communist Party agreed to unite. The political radicalism in the country that followed the First World War and the Russian Revolution boosted the strength of CPGB. MI5, the British Security Service, considered CPGB a threat to national security and one of its Divisions (F) kept surveillance and ran deep-cover penetration operations against it.<sup>3</sup> Suffice it here to say that “by 1955, [...] the CPGB was thoroughly penetrated at almost every level by technical surveillance or informers”.<sup>4</sup> There is a vast literature on the British Secret Services (MI5 and MI6 (the Secret Service)) and communism in general and the Soviet threat in particular and, of course, the ‘war in the shadows’ between the secret services of Russia and Britain continues unabated. More specifically, ‘E’ Branch of MI5 was responsible for colonial affairs and, thus, dealt with international communism and kept contact with MI5 representatives in the British colonies and territories.<sup>5</sup> The concern of the present

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<sup>1</sup> Klugmann, *History*, 21, 25.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Third International’ (1919–1943), was an international communist organization established with initiative from Moscow in 1919- see website of MI5, MI5 History Between the Wars, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/home/mi5-history.html> (May 20, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> West, *MI5 1945-72*, 62. See, also, the Zinoviev letter affair, Bennett, "A Most Extraordinary and Mysterious Business", 1., Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars*, 194, and Neilson, *Britain*, 49. See also Christopher Andrew, *The defense of the realm: the authorized history of MI5*.

<sup>4</sup> Wright, *The Spy Catcher*, 55.

<sup>5</sup> West, *MI5 1945-72*, 19.

paper is with the threat of communism and nationalism in Cyprus, as perceived and responded to by the British Security Services in Cyprus, in the context of its responsibility since 1916 for, inter alia, counter-espionage, counter sabotage and counter-subversion in all British territory. In the means of the “divide and rule” strategy, the British enforced the ideological division of the Greek-Cypriot community by allowing both communism and nationalism to function, but only against each other.

### **Cypriot society before and after the Second World War**

Up until the Second World War, the senior clergy and an oligarchy of landowners controlled the greatest part of the land. Due to this, the Cypriot community had been developed so slowly that, the designation of its structure during the early twentieth century as obsolete is justifiable. The clergy and the landowners cooperated and formed the ruling elite. Below the elite was the class of tradesmen, who were going to be the future bourgeoisie, and a small body of intellectuals, mostly authors and artists.<sup>6</sup> The great majority of the people were farmers and also there were a limited number of artisans.

The bourgeoisie first appeared mainly through the new forms of productive relations that functioned within the frame of the Ottoman system, but it had been expanded extensively when the British arrived in 1878. The transport network improvement and the development of communications through technical innovation (such as the railway, the telegraph, the telephones, the cars etc.) led to the empowerment of the bourgeoisie which developed numerically, economically and politically, focusing on trade, usury and manufacture.

The sovereignty of the bourgeoisie within the economic system could not be established without being combined with

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<sup>6</sup> Konstantinides, *The Cyprus Problem*, 34.

its sovereignty within the political system.<sup>7</sup> So, the adaptation of a nationalistic ideology by the rising bourgeoisie of Cyprus was actually the means of liberation from the domination of the old ruling status quo. At the same time, the purposes of the *Enosis*, the movement of the Greek-Cypriot population to incorporate the island of Cyprus into Greece, ensured to a greater extent the political liberties for its institutional establishment. However, the co-management of the nationalistic ideology and the demand for *Enosis* with the Church, did not allow the bourgeoisie to be separated from the ethnarchy (i.e. the leadership of the Greek Orthodox community in Cyprus).

Thus, under the developing circumstances of the bourgeoisie, the working class is also developed. An increase in the exploitation rate of mining is observed, the first light industries appeared (mostly clothing and footwear), the building sector grew and all these led to the marginalization of the farmers and the simultaneous reinforcement of the working class.<sup>8</sup>

The working class in Cyprus (like the bourgeoisie) appeared relatively late compared to elsewhere in Western Europe and it was then followed by the appearance, evolution and development of the bourgeoisie. It almost originated from the rural class which was gradually declining through extermination. The factories and enterprises created in the cities resulted from the available capital, from the trade and usury, and the mines needed unskilled labor which reflected the level of knowledge of the farmers who moved to the cities.

There was no legislation to protect the workers in terms, for example, of working hours and health care. Theoretically, they should have been working for eight hours but in reality, work begun at sunrise and lasted until the sunset. In the early

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<sup>7</sup> Anagnostopoullou, "The Church of Cyprus and its Ethnarchic role", 199.

<sup>8</sup> *Katsourides, The origins, 107.*

30's the workers, just like the farmers, lived below subsistence level.<sup>9</sup>

The above social context created deadlocks for the majority of the working classes. The low educational level and the absence of political experience did not allow them to create organizations which would represent them and fight for their rights. The salaries and working conditions of the workers were not a topic of discussion and reaction before the end of the First World War mostly because the employees were not aware of their rights.<sup>10</sup>

Both the bourgeoisie and the working class cannot be said to have constituted a unified class as such at the time. The Cypriot working class was significantly heterogeneous. Its composition varied: there was the old section with the artisans, the craftsmen, the factory workers, the miners, the farmers, and the labor in trading houses. The heterogeneity complicated its unified expression on a political level. The gradual development of the Cypriot economy and the efforts of the British to establish the legislation which introduced compulsory work for people from 16 to 60 years old at the Public Works, created the conditions for the homogenization of the labor and class awareness. The working class did not only increase in size but it also massively unified, its power grew and become aware of their power. So, the first trade unions appear and gradually the Cypriot trade union movement and the *KKK* (Kommounistiko Komma Kyprou - Communist Party of Cyprus) as the political expression of the working class, was created.

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<sup>9</sup> Richter, *History of Cyprus*, 611.

<sup>10</sup> Servas, *Cyprus Issue*, 113.

## **The establishment and action of the Communist Party of Cyprus (KKK)**

The Communist Party of Cyprus<sup>11</sup> was officially founded in 1926 by the first communist Cypriots who came back from their studies abroad, and also by workers from the wider area of Limassol.<sup>12</sup> *KKK* appeared in a period when the hope that the island would be given to Greece by the British, just like the Ionian Islands did in 1864, faded. The promises of Britain during the First World War not only were not kept, but in 1925 officially appended Cyprus as its colony. The living conditions of the workers were appalling and people lived in poverty.<sup>13</sup> In all this economic wretchedness, the first communists who appeared in Cyprus during the First World War, started to act. The conditions for the development of a socialist movement were entirely ripe.

The first Marxist core was formed at the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921 by Christodoulos Christodoulou (bank employee), Leonidas Striggos (an employee and later a senior member of the Communist Party of Greece – from now on KKE) and Dimitros Chrisostomides (accountant). They advanced socialist ideas and at the same time organized the workers at labor centers and clubs. They understood the necessity of a newspaper, which would be the major means of expressing the Marxist core and something like this would be extremely valuable. So in December of 1922 they published the newspaper *Pirsos* (Torch), the first Cypriot newspaper with such a radical content.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the communists initiated the creation of the first trade unions of the builders and laborers, the carpenters, and the tailors. In 1923, after the first Marxist

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on the Cyprus parties see Soula Zavou, *Political Parties of Cyprus in the 20th century*, Athens 2002. [in Greek]

<sup>12</sup> Lefkis, *The Roots*, 61-94.

<sup>13</sup> Katsiaounis, *The Consultative Assembly*, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Lefkis, *The Roots*, 75.

group had gathered a significant number of members, this informal organization was named “Communist Party of Cyprus” (KKK).<sup>15</sup> In 1924, the Workers Centre of Limassol was founded and housed those clubs and at the same time developed a set of extreme positions and demands. In 1925 there was a celebration of the Labor Day for the very first time that was initiated by the Workers Center. An active member of the Working Center and the KKK was doctor Nikos Yiavopoulos, who came to Cyprus as soon as he finished his studies in Athens where he was a member of KKE. In order to attack the workers movement, the British exiled Yianopoulos in July of 1925.

Officially, the British did not declare the KKK as illegal. They allowed its function and the publication of its newspaper. However, they prohibited particular references to the national goals either in the newspaper or any other documents. They were closely watching the KKK members and in many cases restrictions were placed on Cypriot communists for a few months, or were imprisoned or they were exiled to isolated villages in Cyprus. The difficult conditions, under which the first Cypriot communists acted, such as the prosecutions by the police and the planting of agents and otherwise listening in, led the KKK to accept its members after very strict vetting procedures, thorough investigation and a trial period (*Neos Anthropos*, December 24, 1926, 4).

The most extreme example of administrative harassment against the Communist Party was the pressure that was exercised against the newspaper that took the place of *Pirsos*. The *Neos Anthropos*, which was the media expression of KKK, was forced to stop its publication three times and the fourth turned out to be the last one. The first time, the publication was suspended because of the two-month imprisonment of Charalambos Solomonides who was the person in charge for the newspaper. The second time, the reason was

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<sup>15</sup> Perdios, *The History*, Vol. A, 21.

again the imprisonment of Solomonides. The newspaper *Neos Anthropos* was temporarily replaced by the newspaper *O Ergatis* (The Worker). The third interruption occurred in 1 January 1929, when the KKK decided to voluntarily enter illegality as a response to the new criminal code of the government. The last publication was in December 6, 1928. On 15 January 1929 the newspaper *O Neos Ergatis* replaced the previous one as a fortnightly newspaper of the farmers and workers.

The founding convention of the KKK took place in Limassol on 14 and 15 of August 1926, under very strict conspiratorial measures. For the official foundation of the KKK, the contribution of KKE and the arrival of Charalambos Vatiliotes in Cyprus, who was a Cypriot resident of Greece and member of KKE, were absolutely necessary.

The Communist Party according to its first declaration and against the rest of the political world of Cyprus, did not aim the unification of Cyprus with Greece, but the autonomy and independence of the island, the abolition of personal property in means of production, the expropriation of the property of the church and the monasteries for the benefit of the landless population and the establishment of a socialist society. At the same time, they planned to unite Cyprus with a future Balkan Soviet Federation. So, they called Greek and Turkish workers and farmers to rise against British imperialism. The messages of KKK were accepted not only by Greek Cypriot but also by Turkish Cypriot labor. Leaders of the party until the uprising against the British colony in October 1931 were the Charalambos Vatiliotes and Kostas Christodoulides. They were both arrested and exiled by the British after the uprising.

It should be noted that concerning the violent events of October 1931<sup>16</sup>, the KKK not only did not officially participate

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<sup>16</sup> About the October uprising see George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, Vol. 3, Cambridge 1972.



in the uprising but it condemned it as “*nationalistic chauvinist provocation of the Cypriot haute bourgeois*”. Neophitos Ioannou mentions that when the party realized that not participating in the uprising was a mistake, it sent the poet – member of the KKK – Teukros Anthias to meet the Archbishop Cyril III and ask the establishment of a common national anti-imperialist front, something which was predictably rejected by the church. On 22 and 23 of October 1931 the Central Committee of the party gathered in Nicosia and decided to participate in the events even if that meant collaboration with the nationalists.

In the wake of the oppressive measures of the British that followed the October 1931 events, the KKK was declared illegal and its leadership was exiled. During the period that followed, which is known as *Palmerocracy* due to the strict restrictions that the new government Palmer imposed, the existence and functioning of any political parties was forbidden. Being illegal, the KKK took advantage of the access it had to the Workers Centers and the unions and continued its work.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to note that although the British allowed the function of KKK, they considered it a threat to the safety of the colony despite the limited number of members and the low momentum of the party. So they exiled its leaders in 1931.

In 22 of October, the colonial government of Cyprus enacted the regulations called “Regulations concerning the defense of Cyprus”. Among everything else, the Governor was granted special powers that allowed him to exile Cypriots, to designate censors etc. Any statutory body had the power to arrest anyone, and all the arrivals and departures from Cyprus were thoroughly monitored. Censorship was imposed on newspapers, to the post-office and the telegraph-office. Some additional regulations prohibited the gathering of more than 5 people and allowed to any governmental body to dissolve the

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<sup>17</sup> About the period that followed the October uprising see Pikros, “Venizelos and the Cyprus Issue”, 252.

gatherings. Moreover, the publication and release of any text was forbidden without written permission.

In a report of Governor Storrs in 1931, concerning the communist activity, a significant increase in the number of its members was observed from 181 to 365 in six months, which was closely monitored by the police. In addition to the members of the party, people who were just participating in the demonstrations of the KKK were also monitored. In 1935, the numerical strength of the KKK was radically decreased due to the prosecutions by Palmer's very draconian regime.<sup>18</sup>

The period that followed after 1936, is a period of reconstruction of KKK. A great influence in this effort was Ploutis Servas who was elected as the General Secretary of the party after his return from Moscow and Greece in 1934. Servas was not allowed to come to Cyprus and he was given permission to come after signing a statement he would abstain from any communist and political propaganda, which he never obeyed.<sup>19</sup> At the fourth convention of the party, which took place in May of 1940 at Derinia, the KKK reconsidered its position concerning the national issue and the possibility for consolidation of the movement and gradually started circumventing its illegal status. So, the establishment of a group which would give them the possibility of legal expression was decided, and that became possible after the gradual relaxation of the English measures. All those considerations and ideas finally led to the establishment of a new political party. Thus, in 1941 the Progressive Party of Working People (Anorthotiko Komma Ergazomenou Laou – AKEL) was born and co-existed with KKK - despite the reactions of a majority of the members of KKK – until 1944 when the KKK was completely unified with AKEL.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Richter, *"The Cypriot Communist Party"*, 109.

<sup>19</sup> Richter, *"The Cypriot Communist Party"*, 111.

<sup>20</sup> Peonides, *Andreas Ziartides*, 11-47.

## **Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL)**

AKEL was founded in 14 April 1941 in a meeting of thirty six people participated. At the founding assembly, not only the members of KKK participated but also progressive personalities of Cyprus.<sup>21</sup> The first conference of AKEL took place later, in 5 October 1941. In this meeting, Ploutis Servas was elected as a General Secretary. The ideology of this political party was supportive towards the workers and anti-fascist whereas, any reference on national matters was mentioned in an indirect and mild way.<sup>22</sup>

In 16 June 1943, AKEL called for volunteers to fight in the armed forces in order to “free the enslaved people from the tyranny of Hitler”. The response was significant. It is estimated that 800 members of AKEL enlisted and 11 out of the 17 members of the Central Committee.<sup>23</sup>

Due to the upcoming municipal elections of 1946, AKEL started turning towards other directions as well in order to broaden its front. As a result, the National Political Cooperation Camp (Parataxi Ethnikis Sinergias – PES) was created which was influenced by AKEL but it also included members of the bourgeoisie.<sup>24</sup> The municipal elections of 26 May 1946 were a great victory for AKEL. They managed to displace the leader of the Right Themistoklis Dervis in Nicosia and to elect Ioannis Klirides. They also had victories in other cities except in Keryneia and in Paphos.

In 7 December 1947, the Coalition of National Liberation (Ethnikos Apeleutherotikos Sinaspismos – EAS) was established by AKEL which was a part of the broader expansion of the national liberation front of the Left. EAS, whose establishment was decided in the fifth conference of

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<sup>21</sup> Papademetres, *Historic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 7, 82.

<sup>22</sup> Generally about AKEL see T. W. Adams, *AKEL: The Communist Party of Cyprus*, California 1971.

<sup>23</sup> Ioannou, *That's how the Cyprus's issue started*, 67.

<sup>24</sup> Perdios, *The History*, 63.

AKEL in 13-15 of September 1947, constituted the continuation of PES and the main instrument by which AKEL was going to promote its thesis about *Enosis*.

In a period of division and polarization, the British called representatives of the population to participate in a consultative meeting (*Diaskeptiki*)<sup>25</sup> to discuss the suggestions of Britain to render a constitution and create a legislative body. AKEL, after negotiations and since the Right rejected its call for cooperation, decided to participate in *Diaskeptiki*, while the Right and the ethnarchy, especially bishop Leontios, were against the idea of adopting a constitution and did not participate. The convention started its action on 1 November 1947, the exact same day that EAS was founded, and finished in May of 1948 without any results because the Left side rejected the British proposals describing them as an attempt to continue the existing regime through a parliament without any serious powers. At the same time, the relationship between the Right and the Left was shaken due to the strikes that took place at that time. The intense circumstances of the protesting movements and the combination of development both in Cyprus and Greece (*Diaskeptiki* and Civil War), affected to a great extent not only the subsequent course of the opposite political camps but, also, the situation that was going to prevail in the Cypriot Community. The already existing differences between the Left and Right had a clear class base by then, and while they were affected by the debate concerning the constitutional proposals of British, they turned towards a peculiar fight for political survival and ideological assertion. Moreover, the adaptation of characteristics and practices of the Greek civil war had as a result the expansion of the differences and the gap between the two sides and led to a frontal conflict and violent actions. The fact that in Cyprus there was no armed conflict was because of the main power of the colonial rule which did

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<sup>25</sup> Katsiaounis, *The Consultative Assembly*, 257.

not favor – and that’s why it did not allow – any practical doubting of its regime.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Referendum for *Enosis***

Empowered by the results of the municipal elections of 1949 where they had prevailed almost everywhere, the Right was determined to keep the Left in isolation and marginalize them politically, and set as a priority the leadership at the *Enosis* movement. On 23 July 1949, the Coordinating Committee of the Cypriot Struggle (SEKA) was founded, and its members were the nationalist municipal counselors and other factors of the Right. SEKA constituted the popular part of the Right, and it was supervised by the ethnarchy.<sup>27</sup>

On 27 September 1949, AKEL sent to the ethnarchy a memo in which they invited them to cooperate because they aimed the submission of a common memo at the General Meeting of UN, sending a representation and also organizing demonstrations. The rejection of the ethnarchy to cooperate with AKEL, led the party to send their own memo to all the delegations of the member-states of UN and at the same time started collecting signatures within Cyprus to support their memo. The ethnarchy, because they were afraid that the Left would take the leadership in the *Enosis* movement, they decided to call a referendum which was settled for the 15 January 1950. Then AKEL decided to directly quit their actions and support the referendum, and simultaneously they criticized the anticommunist behavior of the Right and their denial for collaboration. Both sides worked hard for the referendum to succeed by organizing demonstrations.

The British made clear that there was no possibility of changing the regime in the island and they tried to sabotage the referendum by any means: deportations, prohibition of open

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<sup>26</sup> Alecou, *1948: The Greek Civil War*, 197.

<sup>27</sup> Papademetres, *Historic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, 234.

demonstrations, threats to dismiss the public servants who would participate.<sup>28</sup> The Greek government did not approve the referendum and called the Greek Ambassador during the days when it was conducted.

The Church, called the people to participate in the referendum, while the Left addressed other communities, calling them to support the effort of the Greek Cypriots. The referendum took place from 15 until the 22 January 1950, in a feeling of general enthusiasm. The vast majority (95.7%) of the Greek Cypriots voted for *Enosis* and among them about 800 Turkish Cypriots.<sup>29</sup>

### **The turn towards the armed action**

The demand of *Enosis* gradually started being differentiated, especially after the referendum of the 1950's. Not only the cruelty of the British's position against the Cypriots but also the differentiations concerning the leadership of the *Enosis* struggle and the undertaking of major initiations on behalf of the Right and the ethnarchy, played a significant role in shaping the ideology of the Greek Cypriots' struggle for *Enosis*.

AKEL, with the guidance of KKE, persisted in criticizing the "dirty British/American imperialism". At the same time, and in the context of the "Cold War", AKEL tried to organize itself by drawing up an illegal plan on how to respond to their "international duties", in case of a general conflict in the area, or in case that the party was declared illegal for any reason.<sup>30</sup> Despite the actions that occurred in that direction, the creation of a plan was not possible because the KKE clarified that they could do nothing more than guiding them.<sup>31</sup> However, the true reasons that a basic plan for an armed action was not created,

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<sup>28</sup> Papademetres, *Historic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, 288-299.

<sup>29</sup> Vlachos, *Ten Years*, 29.

<sup>30</sup> Contemporary Social History Archives [ASKI], KKE Archive, Box 371, Φ 20/21/33, July 19, 1951.

<sup>31</sup> ASKI, KKE Archive, Box 371, Φ 20/21/43, August 23, 1951.

were more political rather than practical due to the fact that the party could not foresee that the preferential areas in which they gained political benefits were the massive demonstrations where the political, socio-economical and national requests were combined (*Neos Demokrates*, February 20, 1955).

The Right side, with Makarios undertaking the leadership of both the ethnarchy and the Right party, obviously shifted to more intensive ways for demanding *Enosis*. The extreme anticommunist groups of Kerynia, who promoted the bishop Kiprianos as a new Archbishop, eventually accepted Makarios because in addition to being anticommunist, he was also raised in the context and values of irredentist nationalism and he was the leader of the *enosis* movement having the supporters of the bishop of Kerynia by his side. The main part that the group of the bishop of Kerinia played in the violent conflict between Right and Left during the years 1948-50, elevated his status within the Right subsystem and made these personalities privileged interlocutors of the ethnarchy. Because of all these conjunctures, the meeting of Makarios with the “extremists” of Athens and especially Grivas was inevitable.<sup>32</sup>

In 1953, after a great deal of hesitation, Makarios adopted the proposal that Grivas and his partners submitted to him two years ago to undertake an armed struggle against the British.<sup>33</sup> In 7 May 1953, the meeting of the “Twelve Apostles” took place, as the dominant historiography chose to call the twelve members who decided the foundation of the secret organization for *Enosis* and signed an oath according to which each of them would secure the secret “*sacrificing his own life, tolerating even the hardest of all the sufferings, keep secret everything that is known and desirable to be heard concerning Enosis*”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Papageorgiou, *Grivas*, 620-621.

<sup>33</sup> *Kranidiotis, Difficult Times*, 55-57.

<sup>34</sup> Papagathaggelou, *How I participated*, 261.

A long progression of developments would soon bear fruits. Makarios, either because he wanted to prepare the Greek Cypriot community for what was going to happen, or because he already had a constant need for confirmation of his leadership at the enosis movement, he aimed to encourage the Greek Cypriot population by gatherings and mass demonstrations constantly. The “oath of Faneromeni” that he gave before thousands of Greek Cypriots at the demonstration of the 22 August 1954, is indicative of the following:

“Under these holy domes let us give today the sacred oath. We shall remain faithful to our national call until death. Without quitting. Without yielding. Without transactions. We will condemn violence and tyranny. We will courageously stand against all those minor and temporal obstacles, seeking and achieving Enosis and only Enosis”.<sup>35</sup>

Supportive, for the purposes of Makarios, were also the statements of Hopkinson in the summer of 1954 which, despite the failure of the diplomatic efforts of UN and the conflicts that followed, reinforced the feeling of the “one-way-path” for the Greek Cypriot community.

The first shipment of weapons and other war materials arrived in Cyprus from Greece on 22 February 1954 on the trawler “Sirin”.<sup>36</sup> The trawler was ready for a second task of shipment of weapons into Cyprus. It departed in 20 November 1954 but during its arrival at the shores of Paphos, some activity was observed on the coast so the captain of the boat considered that his mission had been betrayed and after he threw the shipment in the sea, he went to Rhodes.

Within the first fifteen days of October of 1954, Makarios and Grivas met in Athens four times and exchanged their views concerning the revolutionary movement in Cyprus. This was followed by the arrival of Grivas in Cyprus in 26 October 1954.

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<sup>35</sup> Fantis, *The Entombment of Enosis*, 108-109.

<sup>36</sup> Grivas, *Memoirs*, 20.



On 25 January 1955, after extracting information, the British seized a small ship named “Agios Georgios” which was full of weapons.<sup>37</sup> The most important of all though was the detection of a manifesto called “National Force of Liberation of Cyprus” (EMAK) which revealed how the Right and particularly Grivas and his partners perceived the armed anticolonial struggle:

EMAK demands from them and their party not only to be opposed to EMAK but also not to get involved in the armed conflict, just like the population will. We will not accept communists at EMAK, mainly for purposes of feasibility and if the communists are really interested in the Enosis, they will not desire to get involved in the battle for liberation... The best patriotic action they can do is not to participate and one day this action will be recognized as wise and patriotic. The communists should be sure that EMAK has the necessary soldiers and all the means that will lead them to a successful liberating struggle... <sup>38</sup>

Makarios and Grivas decided to rename the organization EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters) after EMAK's manifesto became known. The exclusion of the Left from the anticolonial struggle was a procedure that started right after the union referendum because AKEL, despite all the efforts for cooperation with the Right, did not succeed in participating in any of the activities of the ethnarchy for the internationalization of the Cypriot issue.

When Grivas arrived in Cyprus, as well as training the armed groups, he was also involved in the distribution of weapons, the creation of political hard-core teams and the organization of a communication network. The difficulties for the formation of the armed groups were significant, because the youth of the right wing organizations that were the first

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<sup>37</sup> Papademetres, *Historic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10, 384-390

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 404-405.

members of EOKA had no previous experience in the use of any kind of firearm.<sup>39</sup>

On 29 March 1955, Makarios and Grivas after a meeting they had at the monastery of Kikkos, they set the date of the rebellion for midnight of March 31 to April the 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>40</sup> Shortly after midnight of 31 March to 1 April 1955, the first explosions occurred in Nicosia and other cities of Cyprus. Despite the fact that the explosions are historically mentioned as “deafening explosions that shook the island”, the truth is that Grivas was disappointed by the first results. With the exception of the explosion at RIK (Cyprus Broadcasting Channel) in Nicosia, the rest of them were described as failures or at least without the desirable results. In Famagusta the police found explosive materials of EOKA and at the same time, the identity of Gregoris Afxentiou, one of the most important personalities of the struggle, was revealed. In Larnaca, in spite of the successful explosions, all the participants were arrested, while in Limassol the operation started at 2 am when the police was well prepared to react in any suspicious activity. As a result, most of the participants were arrested.<sup>41</sup>

AKEL, who disagreed with the armed struggle against the British, in 2 April 1955 with an announcement, condemned the explosions and described them as suspicious.<sup>42</sup> The references to Lenin and the extreme references against EOKA, which AKEL used in their announcement, were not helpful at clarifying the tactics of the conflict. On the contrary, EOKA turned against AKEL and its leadership. Two years later, at the plenary session of its Central Committee in May of 1957, AKEL reassure “*that the Party responded correctly against the armed struggle of the Right. At the same time, the Central Committee emphasizes without any hesitation that the position of the Party*

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<sup>39</sup> Grivas, *Memoirs*, 12-13.

<sup>40</sup> Machlouzarides, *Cyprus 1940-1960*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> Drousiotis, *EOKA*, 79. About Grivas's disappointment see Great Britain, Colonial Office, *The terrorism in Cyprus*, 19.

<sup>42</sup> Papademetres, *Historic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, 13-14

*against EOKA has a series of mistakes and some of them quite serious*".<sup>43</sup>

From the beginning of the preparation of the struggle, the different approaches between the two leaders, Grivas and Makarios, were expressed. Makarios preferred to make movements which could be used later as means of pressure against the British and as a tool for the political claim; especially for sabotages and insults of empty targets. Grivas, even though in his memoirs emphasizes that the environment in Cyprus was not encouraging for rebel war, he enforced his plans for an extended armed action.<sup>44</sup>

It is very important to consider that the British Secret Services – irrespectively of what it's been claimed up until today – were aware from the beginning almost everything, even the leader of the organization. Grivas incisively writes:

“February 13: According to information I received last night from Notis, the police is overseeing the area from Trikomo up to Mpogazi where a section of the Intelligence Service has been established. Of course they are looking for me in that area where my birthplace is.” Additionally, getting closer to April 1, 1955: “March 7, 1955: Because the British know that I am here, I intentionally spread rumors that I am disappointed by the existent situation and I want to leave Cyprus in secrecy.”<sup>45</sup>

Even though the infiltration of EOKA by the Special Branch was the primary intelligence goal, this was very difficult to be achieved because, as David Anderson argues, of the structure of EOKA. The rebel groups were invariably small, town and village units often numbering as few as half a dozen men and guerilla bands in the mountains never larger than ten.<sup>46</sup> EOKA, despite the support of a great part of the Greek Cypriot

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<sup>43</sup> Kolokasides, “Strategy and Tactics”, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Kranidiotis, *Difficult Times*, 58-59.

<sup>45</sup> Great Britain, *The terrorism in Cyprus*, 12

<sup>46</sup> David M. Anderson. Policing and communal conflict: the Cyprus Emergency, 1954-60, p. 208.

population, was founded on the premise of keeping the Left and the Turkish Cypriots outside the struggle. The basis on which the struggle was designed and implemented was such that could not promise a different ending than the failure and the division of the population, either nationally or ideologically. The assertion that AKEL could either be neutral in the struggle or participate using its own armed groups in a parallel way, ignores the importance and the intension of the conflict between the two parties all these years. Meanwhile, the ethnarchy was blocked in its need for confirmation of its role against the doubts of its political leadership, and in the unstable balance that was imposed by the allied forces inside the Right subsystem. Thus, Grivas was the only option for the ethnarchy as the leader of the struggle.

By Cypriot standards, the action of EOKA as a way of anticolonial struggle was undoubtedly a radical act but it mainly resulted from a long conflict of a very complicated situation between the ruling ideological parties of the Greek Cypriot community, always against the backdrop of colonial rule. As a result and not as a starting point, the choice of the struggle for *Enosis*, inspired by the elements of irredentist nationalism, constitutes in the period under examination, the most important manifestation of the dominant division within the local community.

The British found the perfect opportunity to render AKEL and its organizations illegal after the proscription of Governor Harding in 15 December 1955. They prohibited the release of documents of the party and they arrested 135 members of AKEL; among them was also the General Secretary of K.E. of AKEL, Ezekias Papaioannou. Although AKEL made it clear that was against the armed struggle, the British seized the opportunity to get rid of the “communist threat”

Under the guidance of the members of AKEL who escaped the arrest, massive strikes and demonstrations were organized. Members of the party who were imprisoned

managed to escape and help the reorganization of the party. AKEL started to recover and in February of 1956 the newspaper “Xaravgi” was published, replacing the previous newspaper “Neos Dimokratias” which was the media expression of AKEL that was prohibited.

### **British Intelligence Services and EOKA**

According to Stephen Dorrill, “it took a long time to set up an effective intelligence gathering machine” in Cyprus in dealing with the EOKA guerrilla war<sup>47</sup>; in fact, the local Special Branch, controlled by MI5, did not discover that the mysterious “leader” of EOKA was Col. Grivas until November 1955, seven months into the EOKA campaign.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, MI6 did not join the colonial fight against EOKA until late into 1958<sup>49</sup>, more than three-and-a-half years after Grivas announced the start of EOKA with a series of bombings on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1955. The intelligence committee that was formed comprised the Special Branch, MI5, MI6 and Army Intelligence but their weekly meetings were permeated with suspicion of each other. It was not until January 1959 that the security services were seriously told to track down Grivas.<sup>50</sup>

According to Peter Wright, a former assistant director of MI5, AKEL was supportive of the EOKA guerrilla campaign led by Grivas<sup>51</sup>, EOKA had penetrated the local Special Branch of the police and an MI5 officer was shot by EOKA in Ledra Street in Nicosia.<sup>52</sup> Sent to Cyprus by the MI5 in January 1959 to help the British army’s 40,000 troops locate elusive Grivas, Peter Wright himself, as part of operation SUNSHINE, in January 1959 assisted John Wyke, MI6’s ‘best technical operator’, to

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<sup>47</sup> Dorrill, *MI6*, 550.

<sup>48</sup> Carruthers, *Winning Hearts*, cited by Dorrill, *MI6*, 552.

<sup>49</sup> Dorrill, *MI6*, 554.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 555.

<sup>51</sup> Wright, *The Spy Catcher*, 154.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

install a secure telephone tap on the overhead telephone wire outside Archbishop Makario's palace. At the same time, Wright searched for the aerial which Grivas used for his receiver and planted (through Greek-Cypriot armed dealer who had been recruited by MI6 and was instructed to buy a consignment of radio receivers in Egypt) a radio receiver on Grivas containing a radio beacon which would lead him right to the EOKA leader. Operation SUNSHINE pinpointed the villages of Yerasa and Palhodia in Limasson as Grivas' centre of operations.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, however, the Constitutional Conference at Lancaster House in late February 1959 settled the Cyprus problem politically. In the words of Wright, in his book 'Spycatcher':

"Looking back, I am certain that, had we been allowed to implement operation SUNSHINE when we first lobbied for it, in 1956, we could have neutralized Grivas at the outset. The Colonial Office, rather than EOKA, would then have been able to dictate the terms of the peace, and the history of that tragic but beautiful island might have taken a different course over the past thirty years".<sup>54</sup>

In its counter-insurgency efforts, the Information Research department (IRD) in Cyprus ran operation TEA-PARTY, a black propaganda operation in the course of which journalists were provided with "titillating stories" (e.g., portraying EOKA members as paedophiles but, also, fed American correspondents with "Secret intelligence reports" to the effect that "captured documents" documented that the communists in Cyprus had joined ranks with EOKA.<sup>55</sup> That black propaganda, a gross distortion of the truth since Grivas and EOKA were anti-communist, AKEL had denounced Grivas' armed struggle against British rule, and, as Dorrill reminds us, the "Cypriot Communist party (AKEL) link to EOKA was tenuous at best."

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 158.

<sup>55</sup> Dorrill, *MI6*, 552.

One of the aims of operation TEA-PARTY in using black propaganda against AKEL was to influence American opinion and reaction in the United Nations. It comes as no surprise to find out that to achieve their aim, “some of the best propagandists were sent to Cyprus to organise an ounter-campaign”.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusions

Historically, the rise of the nationalist cause of *Enosis* preceded the establishment of the Cyprus Communist Party. That in three decades a well-organised communist party evolved in Cyprus is not surprising in view of the demographic composition and the prevailing economy of Cyprus during the period under examination but, also, the fact that the civil war in Greece in 1945-1948 and the oppressive responses by the colonial government towards the Left in Cyprus acted as catalysts that increased its membership and encouraged it to become well-organised and ideologically committed to Moscow-type communism. While both posed a threat to British interests on the island, the British administration approach to dealing with the Greek-Cypriot communists repeatedly (in the 1920's, 1931, 1955) consisted of surveillance, harassment, arrest and (in the 1920's and 1930's) exile of communist party leaders.

The British anti-communist strategy at the outset of the EOKA uprising is of interest in view of the fact that AKEL members had in 1943 enlisted in the British army and fought the Nazis, AKEL had been excluded from EOKA by staunch anti-communist Grivas and EOKA was, in fact, hostile towards AKEL. It is also of interest that despite the fact that the differences between the Left and the Right in Cyprus were intensified as a result of the Greek civil war, both worked for the success of the 1951 referendum for union with Greece only to part company as the outbreak of EOKA's violent start of its

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 552.

guerrilla campaign against the colonial government was approaching.

When, following the 1951 referendum outcome, the right-wing in Cyprus took it upon itself to advance the cause of both enosis as well as anti-communism (and in this sense identifying with the right-wing in Greece), culminating in the launch of EOKA's armed struggle on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1955, the British security services' response was slow. In fact, it was not until 1958 that MI6 joined MI5's efforts to collect high-level intelligence, locate the whereabouts of Grivas and carry out a systematic propaganda campaign internationally against EOKA and the communist threat in Cyprus. Tragically for the Cypriots, in dealing with the both the communists threat and the Greek-Cypriot nationalists, the British had, by the mid 1950's, co-opted the help of Turkish-Cypriot nationalists and brought Turkey into the arena on the side of the Turkish-Cypriots, dangling *taxim* (partition) as the ideal solution to the 'Cyprus problem'. Finally, there is no doubt that not only did the British play Greek-Cypriot nationalists against Greek-Cypriot communists but, also, sowed the seeds of discord among Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots in order to ensure their presence in Cyprus as the cold war continued unabated – a topic for a future paper.

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**ALEXIOS ALECOU** is a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies of the University of London and teaches History at the Open University of Cyprus. His book *1948: The Greek Civil War and Cyprus* was published in 2012. Current work includes the study of the political role of Church in contemporary history as well as the history and transformation of political institutions in South European countries. Email: alexis.alecou@ouc.ac.cy, alexios.alecou@london.ac.uk

**ANDREAS KAPARDIS** holds a Ph.D in Criminology from Cambridge University, is professor of Psychology and Law in the Department of Law, University of Cyprus, since 1999 has been a visiting professor at the Institute of Criminology, Cambridge, and is an elected Life-Member of Clare Hall, Cambridge University. His main research and teaching interests lie in criminology, criminal justice, penology and legal psychology. For a number of years he taught in the Law School of La Trobe University in Australia. Inter alia, he has researched a broad variety of crimes and offenders, criminal justice, psycho-legal issues and sentencing internationally. He has gained many research grants internationally and has presented his work at international conferences. Has published a large number of books, scientific articles, chapters in edited volumes and entries in encyclopedias internationally, including: *Psychology and Law* (4th edition) by Cambridge University Press, 2014; Baldry & Kapardis, A. (eds.), 2012, *Risk-Assessment for Juvenile Violent Offenders*, London: Routledge; *Society, Crime and criminal justice in Cyprus 1878-1900*, Athens: Sakkoulas Press, 2001; co-edited with Krambia-Kapardis and Kourakis *Economic Crimes in Cyprus: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Athens: Sakkoulas Press, 2001; Kapardis & Tamis (eds.), 1988. *Greeks in Australia*, Melbourne: River Seine Press. Finally, he has represented Cyprus on professional bodies within the EU and the Council of Europe numerous times. Email: kapardis@ucy.ac.cy