

Cyprus and the Two German States – ‘Class Struggle’* in the Eastern Mediterranean

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Abstract

During the Cold War, Cyprus was repeatedly in the focus of the interests of the two major military blocs. Within these ideological disputes, the German question played a particular role. Makarios' decision to follow a course of non-alignment through the island's foreign policy meant that the two German states tried to influence the government of Cyprus for their own interests. When Cyprus allowed the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1964 to establish a trade representation in Nicosia the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) feared that East Germany might be officially recognised by the Republic of Cyprus. From this moment on the German class struggle reached Cyprus. In the period from 1964 to 1972, the political and economic relations of these three countries were influenced by the tense conflict between the two German states.

Keywords: Cyprus, FRG, GDR, Berlin, class struggle, German-Cypriot relations, Cold War, communist threat, Non-Alignment Movement, Hallstein Doctrine

Introduction

The developments in Cyprus in the years between 1955 and 1959 led to the internationalisation of the Cyprus problem. That meant *inter alia* that both Turkey and Greece sought the support of the major, influential states over the Cyprus question. Greece supported the desire of the Greek Cypriots for *enosis* and tried to enforce this aim under the pretext of self-determination, particularly at the UN. Turkey, concerned about the security of Turkish Cypriots on the island and officially brought into the game by Britain as an opponent to the Greek ambitions, now publicly advocated the division of the island.

While the British policy for Cyprus became more and more aligned to Turkish policy, and the United States at the same time supported Britain's plans, the Soviet Union and its satellite states supported Greece. The aim of Russian policy was quite clear: Moscow wanted to use the

* The East Germans used the word 'class struggle' in two different ways. There was the traditional Marxist class struggle between the Proletariat and the Capitalists, but the East Germans considered the conflict between them and West Germany as another kind of class struggle: the struggle between a communist-socialist society against Imperialism. The term 'class struggle' in this article is used to explain the conflict of systems between East and West Germany.

opportunity to drive a wedge into the southeastern flank of NATO. Accordingly the German Democratic Republic (GDR) also supported the Greek position. East Berlin unreservedly supported the freedom struggle of the Greek Cypriots against the British 'imperialists'. So it was a peculiar irony that the GDR supported the EOKA and, as a consequence, George Grivas, who had fought all his life against the communists.

In contrast to the GDR, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) did not take a clear position in this conflict. The problems of the government in Bonn were obvious: after the Federal Republic of Germany had been founded, the West Germans managed, within a few years, to establish good political and economic relations with Greece and Turkey. Apart from the political relations between West Germany and these countries, economics played a key role. A unilateral statement in favour of one of these two countries would have jeopardised these relationships.

In addition, Bonn was aware of the fact that any criticism of British colonial policy would be understood as interference in internal British affairs. In this case, there was a risk to jeopardise the not too cordial, but working relationship with Great Britain. Therefore the federal government decided to take a strictly neutral stance on the Cyprus question, and during this period, the FRG *officially* supported only NATO's efforts to find a solution. West Germany rejected publicly all efforts by foreign countries to play an active role in the conflict.¹

This official attitude, however, did not mean that the conflict was not discussed or analysed in Bonn. Internally the developments in Cyprus were observed closely. There were voices in the Foreign Ministry, which criticised the activities of both the British and Greek Cypriots. Chancellor Adenauer, in particular, frequently expressed in private talks his disapproval of Britain's Cyprus policy.

The West German Stance on Developments in Cyprus in the 1950s

The records show, however, that the FRG was involved in the conflict, although it publicly declared its neutrality in the Cyprus question. During the whole period, all involved parties repeatedly approached the federal government requesting them to intervene in the dispute over Cyprus, or at least to mediate. Contrary to the official position, Bonn often agreed to these requests and tried to act as a mediator – but only in diplomatic background meetings. One typical example was the official visit to Greece by German Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano in May 1956. In a non-public conversation with Greek officials he stated that the German government was well aware of the fact that the Greek government covered up the 'murderous' actions of EOKA in

1 For a detailed analysis of the West German politics on the Cyprus conflict in the 1950s see Th. Kruse (2008) 'Deutschland und der Zypernkonflikt (1955-1959). Aus den Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes' [Germany and the Cyprus Conflict (1955-1959). The Records of the Federal Foreign Ministry], *Thetis*, Vol. 15, pp. 177-193.

Cyprus and that this behaviour was irresponsible. He also advised the Greek government to distance itself from EOKA, otherwise its credibility would suffer.²

This is only one example of how the Germans tried to intervene in the whole process. However, many different opinions existed in the German Foreign Ministry on how to handle the Cyprus conflict. In the various political departments that dealt with the problem, some tended towards the Turkish, others towards the Greek point of view. A striking example is the different terminology used in the reports for the EOKA movement. Some authors referred to the members of the organisation as ‘terrorists’, others as the ‘militant resistance movement of the Greek Cypriots’ and yet others as the ‘freedom movement’. Despite the different points of view, the analysts at the German Foreign Ministry concluded at the end of 1958 that the Germans had to show their colours in the dispute.

But the next turn in the Cyprus dispute came as a surprise to the West German government and spared the Germans from aligning themselves with one side or the other in the conflict. Agreement was reached between Turkey and Greece on the idea to create a new sovereign and independent state. The Zurich and London Agreement in 1959 led to the foundation of the Cyprus Republic. Great Britain – not involved in the negotiations in Zurich – accepted the proposals presented by Turkey and Greece. London wanted to be rid of the Cyprus problem and the British finally reached the goal they had sought in the Eastern Mediterranean region, namely to have two large extraterritorial bases in Cyprus.

West German Diplomacy towards the Republic of Cyprus

The Federal Republic of Germany was among the first states to recognise the new Republic of Cyprus. The first German Ambassador to Cyprus was Dr Joseph Koenig.

Experts in the German Foreign Ministry analysed the new situation and concluded that the FRG should play an active role in political and economic matters in Cyprus, for various reasons. The new republic should be integrated into the Western part of the world, and to achieve this aim, powerful and prolonged economic help was necessary. The experts were also worried about the influential and well-organised communist party of Cyprus, AKEL (Progressive Party of Working People). In their minds, AKEL was at that time the only organised party, which also controlled large organisations such as the leftist trade union, PEO (Pancyprian Federation of Labour). In Bonn, the government was afraid of communists taking over the Mediterranean island. For that reason, the Federal Foreign Ministry was in favour of supporting President Makarios’ government

2 Cf. the protocol of conversation between the German Foreign Minister Brentano and the British Ambassador. During their conversation the German Minister mentioned some details of his statements made on the occasion of his visit to Athens in spring 1956 (8 June 1956) concerning the Cyprus question. See Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry (PA), B26, 4.

both politically and financially.³

Taking into account that the German analysis of AKEL's structure was correct, it still has to be noted that the Germans did not fully realise the political aims of that party. In its public presentation, the communist party of Cyprus followed the political guidelines set by Moscow, but internally they had reached an agreement with Makarios to abstain from nominating their own candidates in the parliamentary elections, but accept an offer from Makarios of five parliamentary seats for their party. This decision is especially noteworthy because AKEL would have been in the position to gain more than these five parliamentary seats had they nominated their own candidates throughout the island. It is obvious that since the foundation of the Cyprus Republic the communist party tried to reach a compromise agreement with the other political powers in Cyprus. The reason was rather simple: AKEL was not strong enough to manage a communist takeover of the island without causing strong reactions by the nationalist powers of the island and of course by Turkey and other NATO members.

Despite the alleged 'communist threat', Foreign Minister Brentano and the political analysts of the Federal Foreign Ministry thought it would be easy to deal with the new government in Cyprus. In their opinion the members of the Cypriot cabinet were young and inexperienced politicians. The officials in Bonn noted in their analysis that not only the very young Foreign Minister Spyros Kyprianou but also the President himself were totally inexperienced in foreign policy. The German Foreign Ministry instructed Ambassador Koenig, therefore, to monitor and influence the government of Cyprus according to the interests of the Western States.⁴

But after a few months the officials in Bonn had to accept that their assessment of Makarios and his government was wrong. Makarios refused to be integrated into the politics of the NATO members and started to steer a course of a non-aligned foreign policy. He announced that it was the political aim of the Cyprus government to maintain friendly relations with all countries, which were members of the United Nations. In the ensuing months, many countries of the Eastern Bloc decided to open embassies in Nicosia. In particular, the USSR became more active on the island. As a first step, Moscow planned to run their embassy in Nicosia with 180 personnel, although in the end Cyprus accepted a Soviet embassy with 130 employees – in a country with less than 600,000 inhabitants.

The Soviets welcomed Makarios' course of non-alignment. They saw an opportunity to develop political relations and to present their country as an important partner for Cyprus. While the Soviets in cooperation with AKEL gained a foothold on the island, the efforts of the West

3 Many measures were taken into account by the Federal Foreign Ministry, e.g. to grant loans by the Reconstruction Loan Corporation (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, KfW), to include Cyprus in technical assistance programmes, to invite leading politicians, economists and journalists to the FRG, to launch scholarship programmes for students etc. Many of these planned measures were implemented, though later than expected by the Cypriots. Cf. the relevant papers for the years 1961 and 1962. See PA, B26, 118; B26, 200.

4 Cf. a letter sent to ambassador Koenig by Foreign Minister Brentano (13 July 1960). See PA, B26, 116.

German government were less successful. Right after the foundation of the Cyprus Republic, Bonn promised to provide Cyprus with economic aid. But until spring 1961 no substantial German assistance reached Nicosia.⁵

At that time, the economic situation in Cyprus was bad and the island depended on external aid, so Makarios attempted to increase political pressure towards Bonn to obtain more help. He tried to take advantage of the fact that the GDR had started activities in Cyprus in March 1961 when the island became a new destination for GDR-sponsored Mediterranean cruises. Makarios, well aware of the heightened tension between the two German states, accepted the request of an East Berlin official to welcome a large group of East German tourists with an official reception. This step led to a massive protest by the West German Embassy, with Ambassador Koenig arguing that only the West German government represented the whole of Germany because, contrary to the East German regime, it was democratically legitimated, and Makarios himself had accepted this stance in the past. The official reception for East German tourists by the president could be considered as an unfriendly act. In a discussion with Koenig Makarios apologised for the reception, but he was well aware of the fact that his goal had been met as the German Embassy immediately asked Bonn for financial assistance for Cyprus.⁶

This case is symptomatic for the relations among these three states in between 1961 and 1963. The GDR was not an important player in Cyprus but tried to strengthen its presence on the island. West Germany, on the other hand, watched every step of the GDR in Cyprus and attempted to intervene if necessary. But in Bonn no one thought that the GDR would become a real threat for the West German position in Cyprus. Makarios again was well aware of the delicate situation. Officially he confirmed that his government only recognised the FRG as the sole legitimate German state. But the attempts of the GDR to gain more influence in Cyprus were to some extent helpful for the Cyprus government, too. They could be used as a means to put pressure on the FRG.

In addition to the developments in Cyprus, the events in Berlin in 1961 played a significant role in the relationship, too. After the erection of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, the whole situation became aggravated.

The Non-Alignment Movement and Makarios' visit to Berlin

Due to the fact that Western powers, as well as the federal government, could not react efficiently to the measure taken by the GDR government, German Chancellor Adenauer asked for

5 Cf. the report of the German Embassy Nicosia sent to the Federal Foreign Ministry, including Cyprus' bid for substantial economic talks with the Government of the FRG (10 June 1961). See PA, B26, 118.

6 Cf. the report of the German Embassy Nicosia sent to the Federal Foreign Ministry (7 July 1961). See PA, B26, 118.

international help. Among other moves, Adenauer sent a personal letter to President Makarios.⁷ Officials in Bonn were well aware of the fact that Cyprus could play an important role in this situation. In August 1961, Makarios had announced that Cyprus was willing to play an active role in the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM). It was no secret that some leaders of NAM member states favoured the recognition of the GDR as a sovereign state. Such a decision would have made the West German claim to sole representation obsolete. Therefore, Chancellor Adenauer asked Makarios for help in view of the forthcoming NAM conference in Belgrade. The letter did not fall short of the desired effect, because Makarios was the only speaker at the Belgrade conference who took position in favour of the West German point of view. Eventually it was due to the Cyprus delegation that no decision was taken by the conference towards the recognition of the GDR.

It is indisputable that the Belgrade conference caused changes in the bilateral relations between the FRG and Cyprus. While West German officials had thought one year earlier that it would be easy to influence the Cyprus Government, they now had to recognise that things had changed. With regard to the German question and the position of the Non-Alignment Movement concerning this case, the FRG was, up to a certain point, reliant on the position of Makarios.⁸

In May 1962, Makarios paid a state visit to West Germany. After talks with Federal President Lübke and Chancellor Adenauer in Bonn, Makarios went to Berlin. During Makarios' stay in Berlin, a 15-year-old boy tried to flee from East to West Berlin causing a skirmish between West and East German police forces. The boy was badly wounded by several bullets fired by GDR border guards but he was saved in the end. An East German border guard was less fortunate and was killed by a stray bullet.⁹ The incident became a media event in both parts of Germany, where the East German newspapers did not report on the young refugee, but spoke of an orchestrated boundary violation in which an East German border guard was shot in cold blood, and the West German media reported on the young refugee who was rescued after an emergency operation and was a witness against the inhumane government in East Berlin. Many West German politicians, as well as Makarios, visited the boy in the hospital. These visits were intensely utilised for propaganda purposes – not only in the West German press but also in Cyprus. In Nicosia, the press even reported erroneously that the boy had fled East Berlin to see Makarios. Finally, Makarios' Berlin visit contributed to his better standing in not only West Germany but also Cyprus.

7 Cf. records of the State Archive of the Republic of Cyprus (SArchCy), FA1 285, p. 10f.

8 On several occasions Makarios mentioned his efforts to strengthen the political position of the FRG at the Belgrade Conference in 1961. He pointed out that he even prevented a resolution by the Non-Alignment Movement that would have accepted two German states. Cf. the report on a conversation between the German Ambassador Petersen and Makarios (23 May 1966). See PA, AV NA 1479.

9 P. Ahonen (2011) *Death at the Berlin Wall*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 65ff.

On the final day of the state visit both sides issued a joint statement where they stressed that it had been a very successful and harmonious event. But this statement was deceptive because the Cypriots were disappointed, since the Germans promised more help, but mentioned no specific figures. And, although Makarios took a clear position in favour of the FRG in the matter of the German question on numerous occasions, the Germans gave no commitment to support Makarios' political course, such as in his proposed constitutional amendments.¹⁰

The GDR as a Political Factor in Cyprus

In Cyprus, 1963 was marked by interethnic political conflict. Makarios continued his efforts to amend the constitution with the objective to reduce the constitutional rights of the Turkish Cypriots. Great Britain and the US had no interest in becoming involved in this interethnic conflict. Both governments only half-heartedly tried to dissuade Makarios from these plans. As a result the situation was aggravated.

At the end of 1963 there was a gunfight between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The tense situation escalated and some areas descended into a state akin to civil war. Subsequently the Turkish Cypriots left the government, the Green Line in Nicosia was created separating the two ethnic groups, and the UN Security Council dealt with the Cyprus issue. Throughout this phase of the conflict, the FRG remained on the sidelines passively watching developments. The GDR, on the other hand, publicly supported Makarios' positions in the Cyprus question because they saw the possibility to achieve official recognition from a Western country. In March 1964, GDR officials got in contact with those of the Cyprus Republic to negotiate the establishment of a flight connection between East Berlin and Nicosia operated by the GDR airline *Interflug*. After air services commenced in May, based on a six-month license, the West Germans protested vehemently, but without success.¹¹

The reason for the fast-track approval was again a political manoeuvre: since 1960 the FRG had attempted to conclude an air transport agreement with Cyprus. In the context of these negotiations the West Germans had tried to dictate the conditions of the agreement but the government of Cyprus had rejected any preconditions. Makarios' aims were to promote tourism in Cyprus, to stimulate the regional economy, and to obtain foreign currencies. To achieve these aims, flight connections from Europe were urgently needed. It was that hoped the agreement with the GDR would put pressure on the FRG to conclude an air agreement making *Lufthansa* a main European carrier to Cyprus. In addition, the Federal Foreign Ministry had been applying pressure

10 Reports, dossiers, etc. regarding Makarios' state visit to the FRG. See PA, B26, 200.

11 Cf. Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv [Foundation Archives of Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives] (SAPMO), DY30/IV A2/20/540; PA NA 1480; SArchCy; FAI III10.

on *Lufthansa*, since 1964, to fly to Cyprus in order to force the GDR airline *Interflug* out of the island. Eventually in 1967, Cyprus and the FRG signed an agreement; however, Lufthansa still did not fly to Cyprus. Internal rivalries in the federal government prevented it. In the end the Federal Foreign Ministry had to announce officially that economic factors prevented Lufthansa from flying to Cyprus but internal papers showed that the *Lufthansa* management in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Economics rejected flying to Cyprus for political reasons, namely to force the GDR *Interflug* out of Cyprus.¹²

The GDR, on the other hand, tried to conclude an official permanent air agreement with Cyprus. Such an agreement was wanted for several reasons, but the most important was to finally sign a bilateral treaty with the government of Cyprus that could form a basis for future diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, the competent authorities in Cyprus rejected the East German demands because the Cypriot Government still hoped for an agreement with *Lufthansa*. In 1970, although another attempt to bring *Lufthansa* to Cyprus failed, the government of Cyprus this time reached an agreement with the FRG that allowed Cyprus to sign a bilateral air agreement with the GDR. This, however, was only conceded on a ministerial level and not between the two governments: Such a bilateral agreement between Cyprus and the GDR was signed in 1971.¹³ The West German Foreign Ministry never succeeded in forcing the GDR airline out of Cyprus. The last scheduled flight of *Interflug* took place on 2 October 1990.

The rapid success in the field of aviation in 1964 led the GDR government to the unanimous opinion that they should use the opportunity to secure further progress in Cyprus. So East Berlin proposed to conclude trade agreements. The Cypriot authorities accepted, and both sides agreed to start preparatory talks. In the meantime the air route from East Berlin to Cyprus was further developed and tourists from the GDR came to Cyprus. But this caused a problem because some tourists of the GDR fled to the FRG embassy and presented their application to immigrate to West Germany.¹⁴ The West German embassy used these incidents for propaganda in Cyprus.¹⁵

The GDR reacted in its own way and in a letter sent to the Foreign Ministry of Cyprus, argued that these incidents were orchestrated by certain foreign circles outside the GDR who were

12 Cf. the records of the Lufthansa company archive (LHArch), folder 'Verkehr Europa Zypern'.

13 For the relevant documents see SArchCy, FAI 1110. The first scheduled air service from West Germany to Cyprus by Lufthansa was eventually carried out in March 1982.

14 In October 1964 five citizens of the GDR fled via the West German Embassy in Nicosia. They were transferred by plane to Frankfurt and Düsseldorf, respectively.

15 In the case of the head physician of the Polyclinic of East-Berlin, Dr. Walter, who fled 13 October 1964, the Embassy sent a note verbale to the Foreign Ministry of Cyprus: 'Like 3½ million people before him, Dr. Walter has preferred freedom to a life in a state prison which calls itself the "German Democratic Republic". Many more would follow him if they only had the chance without hurting their dear ones left behind. The German people, therefore, demand the right of self-determination for the whole of the German Nation, through free and secret elections, so that they can decide about their future and destiny themselves.' SArchCy, FAI 286, p. 33.

attempting to disturb the tourism relations between the GDR and Cyprus. In addition they stressed that the activities of the West German Embassy were illegal and only done in order ‘to propagate their common illegal presumptions’.¹⁶ The ‘class struggle’ between the two German states had finally reached Cyprus.

In November 1964, officials at FRG Foreign Ministry were shocked to learn that the Cypriot government had concluded a commercial treaty with East Germany, which included the establishment of a GDR trade mission in Nicosia. A special envoy was immediately sent to Nicosia to discuss the situation; however, he could not prevent the opening of a trade mission. The main problem for the West Germans was the fact that they themselves had similar missions – namely in countries that recognised the GDR. In this way, the FRG tried to circumvent their own Hallstein Doctrine,¹⁷ which stated that the FRG could have no diplomatic relations with such countries.

When the West German officials learned that the new trade mission of the GDR would have consular rights, too, the federal government reacted in a harsh way. They put the government in Nicosia under pressure by announcing they would take diplomatic and economic actions if the Cypriot authorities granted consular rights to the new mission. Bonn feared that it could be interpreted as *de facto* recognition if the GDR mission were equipped with these rights.

Makarios was concerned about these developments and the possible implementation of the Hallstein Doctrine. This would mean the loss of West German economic aid towards Cyprus – a very important matter at that time. As a result, the Cypriots changed the agreement with the GDR so that it became consistent with the West German demands.¹⁸

The GDR, on the other hand, rejected the changes made unilaterally by the Cypriot authorities. The responsible authorities of the GDR explained that they would stick to the previous agreements. A few weeks later Makarios signalled *inter alia* during a friendly discussion with the head of the GDR mission, Ingo Oeser, that his government would not change the

16 Cf. the protest note sent to the Foreign Ministry of Cyprus the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the GDR. SArchCy, FAI 505, p. 46f.

17 The Hallstein Doctrine, named after the West German politician Walter Hallstein and established in 1955, was an integral part of the foreign policy of the FRG. Responsible for the wording of this doctrine, however, was the West German diplomat Wilhelm Grewe. The doctrine stipulated that the FRG would not establish or maintain diplomatic relations with any state that recognised the GDR. In fact the Hallstein Doctrine was applied only in two cases: in 1957 the FRG broke off its diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia and in 1963 with Cuba immediately after these countries had recognised the GDR. Within the framework of the West German policy of détente [Entspannungspolitik] starting in the late 1960s the doctrine became dispensable.

18 In November 1964 Bonn sent a special envoy (ambassador extraordinary Dietrich Freiherr von Mirbach) to Cyprus who held talks with Makarios. For details see H.-P. Schwarz (1995) ‘Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland’ [Files on the Foreign Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany] 1964, Vol. 2, p. 1367ff; PA, NA 1479. The changes were confirmed in a letter by the Acting Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, G. Pelaghias (5 December 1964). See PA, NA 1479.

agreement unilaterally.¹⁹ It is obvious that Makarios tried to play a tactical game.

East Berlin was planning to operate the new trade representation like an embassy; that is, they intended to use 10 operational units, including a radio operator and a secret service officer, positions not needed for a simple Chamber of Commerce representation. A further indicator was the fact that the head of the mission would be responsible for the development of state relations with Greece.²⁰

In early 1965, East Germany had managed to establish an independent base in Nicosia. The GDR was now in a position to pursue its own interests in Cyprus directly. All three countries from this point on tried to enforce and secure their own interests by various means, such as by tactical power games, threats and blackmail.

Political Power Games

The attempts of the three countries to enforce their own interests which were typical examples for the Cold War tit-for-tat behaviour are shown below in the following examples.

Flag Incidents

The fact that the national flag was hoisted regularly at the GDR's trade mission in Nicosia caused the officials of the West German Embassy to always react in a stereotypical way where they officially lodged protests to the Government of Cyprus with notes verbales.²¹ The first time it occurred was in March 1965, and Ambassador Koenig immediately presented a protest note at the Cypriot Foreign Ministry. During his conversation with the acting Foreign Minister Andreas Araouzos, Koenig demanded the responsible authorities to intervene against the East German activities. Araouzos only responded that they would consider their legal options but made no specific commitments. He pointed out that his government had not wanted closer contacts with the countries of the Eastern Bloc, but the economic situation had made this step necessary. He argued that the GDR, for instance, was willing to buy thousands of tons of Cypriot spring potatoes, which would mean a massive economic boost for the agricultural sector. If the government intervened now because of the incident, the potato sale might not take place and the

19 In a letter the head of the GDR Trade Mission, I. Oeser, rejected the changes made unilaterally by the Cyprus Foreign Ministry (January 1964). See PA, MIa, IA 12907. For the conversations conducted on this matter see PA, MIa, IA 12890.

20 Decision of the Council of Ministers of the GDR, No. 34/9/65 (7 January 1965). See SAPMO, DC 20/I 4/1070.

21 Up until 1959 the national flags of the GDR and the FRG were identical (a black-red-gold tricolour). In October 1959, the GDR changed the design and added a coat of arms (a hammer and a compass, surrounded by a ring of rye). The West German Government interpreted this policy as a breach of the constitution and an attempt of the GDR to divide Germany. Until 1969, all West German officials abroad were instructed to protest, if the GDR flag was hoisted in their host country.

public might believe that the FRG was responsible for this colossal economic damage. Then Araouzos mentioned that they still had 4,000 tons of winter potatoes in storage, which were urgently awaiting somebody to buy. He mentioned that if the Federal Republic decided to buy these goods, it could regain much political terrain in Cyprus. Ambassador Koenig rejected this more or less hidden attempt of extortion.²²

Several days later the West German Ambassador had an appointment with the Cypriot Foreign Ministry again. This time he met Foreign Minister Kyprianou. Once more Koenig complained about the behaviour of the GDR officials in the trade mission, to which his Cypriot counterpart referred only to former statements which stated that the Cyprus Government was bound to the laws and other regulations and was responsible for their observance, and there was no law in Cyprus which explicitly prohibited the hoisting of flags. Also, it was stated that the agreement with the GDR did not include any passages prohibiting such activities. In addition, Kyprianou replied that there were several aspects concerning the FRG which bothered his government, for instance, the negative attitude of the German press, which had – allegedly – distorted the truth on numerous occasions in connection with the Cyprus problem and the military aid given to Turkey. In the end the West German objections were rejected in a simple and concise manner.

Ambassador Koenig was upset about the Cypriots' reaction, as is evident from his subsequent report to Bonn. He recommended putting Nicosia under immense pressure and to suspend financial aid to Cyprus until the relationship between the two countries had returned to normal. In the same report, he asked for his recall as ambassador. He declared this step necessary, because his relationship with the members of the government of the Republic of Cyprus had to be regarded as totally shattered. The Foreign Ministry in Bonn eventually rejected Koenig's request due to legal objections.²³

In contrast to its publicly promoted image of the friendly relationship between the FRG and Cyprus, the bilateral contacts between both countries were severely disturbed because both sides insisted to enforce their own interests.

East and West German Propaganda in Cyprus

Both German states tried to win over the Cypriot government for their positions by the use of suitable propaganda; simultaneously, the opposing side was to be brought massively into disrepute.

22 Cf. the report of the German Embassy Nicosia sent to the Federal Foreign Ministry (13 March 1965). See PA, B26, 325.

23 Cf. the report of the German Embassy Nicosia sent to the Federal Foreign Ministry: including ambassador Koenig's report about his meeting with Kyprianou (21 April 1965). See PA, NA 1479. Some experts in the Federal Foreign Ministry suggested keeping ambassador Koenig in Nicosia. They feared that Turkey could misinterpret an official change at the embassy as an indicator for a pro-Makarios tendency in West German policy.

For example in 1965, the West German side sent a dossier about Walter Ulbricht to Nicosia.²⁴ In this dossier the West German writers alleged, among other things, that the politics of Ulbricht had harmed the German people like no other person since Hitler. He was suspected of having committed political assassinations and of being responsible for so-called concentration camps in the GDR in which many people had died so far. In addition the writers argued that Ulbricht was not a German because he had accepted Russian citizenship during his time in Moscow. Consequently, as a foreigner, he could not be a person capable to take decisions with regard to the German question.²⁵

East Berlin officials on the other side used their contacts with the Cypriot daily communist newspaper, *Haravghi*, to start a smear campaign in Cyprus against the federal president of the FRG Heinrich Lübke. In an article in *Haravghi*, Lübke was denounced as a secret agent of the Gestapo who had been personally responsible for the deaths of hundreds of people by forced labour under the Nazis.²⁶

Subtle Blackmail

Since the establishment of the trade mission of the GDR, the Cypriot government had exempted certain export goods of the GDR from customs duties as a gesture of goodwill. In mid-1968, the GDR submitted requests for a large number of goods to be exempt from customs duties. This time the relevant Cypriot authorities rejected some of these applications. For this reason the Deputy Head of the East German trade mission, Willi Berger, visited the senior official at the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Doros Pieridis, and complained about the rejected applications. The representative came right to the point and asked for the reason of the rejection. Without waiting for an answer, he argued that his government would see the refusal as an unfriendly act. At the same time, he pointed out to the Cypriot official that the leader of his mission had a friendly personal relationship with President Makarios.

The Cypriot explained the goodwill aspect of the previous regulation and stressed that it would not be possible to react to all requests in such a way. He went on to ask the GDR official why he tried to connect the economic arrangements between their states with the relationship between the head of trade mission and Makarios. The GDR representative avoided giving an answer, and instead he emphasised that his mission was willing to prove its friendliness towards the Cypriot people and its government. Therefore, they would refrain from actions which might

24 Walter Ulbricht was the Chairman of the Council of State [Staatsratsvorsitzender] of the German Democratic Republic from 1960-1973.

25 Cf. the letter sent to the Foreign Ministry of Cyprus by the Federal Foreign Ministry (22 February 1965). See SArchCy, FAI 505, pp. 58ff.

26 Cf. the note verbale on behalf of the Government of the FRG delivered by ambassador Koenig to the Foreign Ministry of Cyprus (28 December 1965). See SArchCy, FAI 287, pp. 3ff.

create a difficult situation for the Government of Cyprus, for instance, to publicly announce the former Nazi activities of the commercial attaché and other members of the West German embassy.

The Cypriot official was at first shocked by the GDR representative's extortion attempt. He then countered that his ministry was quite aware of the fact that many activities of the trade mission did not correspond to the regulations already agreed on, and so, if the GDR graded the refusal to grant tax exemptions to GDR goods as an unfriendly act, his government in return would consider the issuing of visas and all the other unauthorised activities by the trade mission as an unfriendly act, too.

After the official had informed the ministers in charge about that conversation, the Cypriot government reacted resolutely and ordered the trade mission to stop issuing visas. They were also not allowed to publish and distribute press releases which did not deal with economic matters. Moreover, they forbade the head of the mission as well as his deputy to participate in events organised by the cities and villages of Cyprus.²⁷

Quite obviously the relationship between East Germany and Cyprus was not unburdened in the 1960s. There was a sharp contrast of diplomatic reality with the publicly expressed friendly relationship between the two states.

Conclusion

The relations among the three countries in the years from 1964 to 1972 were marked by attempts to enforce each country's own interests. Although they differed in how it was done, numerous attempts had threatening, if not extortionate elements in common.

In order to prevent the recognition of East Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany threatened the Government of Cyprus with the withdrawal of economic aid and the implementation of the Hallstein Doctrine. East Germany, in its search for recognition by the Republic of Cyprus, threatened the government in Nicosia with the publication of allegedly incriminating material that could harm the reputation of the republic if political agreements were not reached.

Makarios, however, wanted to improve the economic development of his country, so he tried to take advantage of the rivalry between the two German states and attempted to play the interests of both states off against each other. With this tactic he walked a thin line. This was particularly evident in the late 1960s when the relationship between Cyprus and the two German states was disturbed. Nevertheless, in this period the Cypriots had a clear political advantage, as they were in a stronger position. Both German states combined their own interests with the political support of the government of Cyprus and tried to cope with the political moves carried out by Makarios.

²⁷ Cf. the notice for the Director General [Original in Greek: ΣΗΜΕΙΩΜΑ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΓΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΗΝ] SArchCy, FAI 610, pp. 20ff.

As a result, a strained relationship with the two German states was acceptable for the Cypriots – at least for as long as they could profit from this situation.

The Events of 1972 and 1974 Led to a Change in the Political Constellation

The West German policy of detente and the signature of the Basic Treaty (*Grundlagenvertrag*) in 1972 had an ameliorating effect and confrontations between the two German states in Cyprus simply disappeared.²⁸ The Federal Republic no longer fought against the international recognition of the GDR, which eventually led to Cyprus recognising the GDR in December 1972. Thus, the GDR had achieved its ultimate goal in Cyprus.

The events in Cyprus in the summer of 1974 and the subsequent occupation of parts of the island by Turkish troops, forced Makarios, after his return to Cyprus, to urgently search for international help. With regard to the two German states, this meant that Cypriots were depending on the goodwill of both the FRG and the GDR because there was nothing to be used as leverage. Although both countries supported the Greek Cypriot government in its attempts to solve the Cyprus problem, it was obvious that the governments in Bonn and East Berlin had lost much of their interests in the island.

The now developing political relations can be characterised as mainly pragmatic. This meant that Cypriots had to swallow some bitter pills, too, and they had to subordinate themselves to the economic interests of the FRG and the GDR. Further development resulted in the solution of the German question. The government of the Republic of Cyprus, however, is until today searching for a solution.

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28 The Basic Treaty (official: Treaty concerning the basis of relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic) was signed on 21 December 1972 in East Berlin. It came into force in June 1973.

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