

Conspiracy Theories and Cypriot History: The Comfort of Commonly Perceived Enemies

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Abstract

A distinct Cypriot history as opposed to a Greek and Turkish national narrative did not appear before the catastrophe of 1974. Even after that, no consensus on the main parameters of recent Cypriot history emerged. One unifying element, however, did exist to which most Cypriots from different communities and political factions adhere, and this is the widespread conviction that Cyprus has fallen victim to foreign powers.¹ According to this school of thought no violence would have occurred if not for the poisonous influence of Anglo-American conspiracy. Far from being confined to popular discourse, this theory exists and repeats itself in academic circles and 'scholarly' research. It seems to provide a comfortable – yet dangerous – exit from considering each other's responsibilities for various aspects of the 'Cyprus problem'. In order to put major conspiracy theories to the test, some aspects of British colonial policy in Cyprus and British-American involvement in the Cyprus Crisis of 1974 will be examined here. The intention is to exemplify the thorny passage to a future scholarship-based rewriting of a common Cypriot history.

Keywords: Conspiracy theories, diplomatic history, British colonial administration, American diplomacy, 1974 crisis in Cyprus

British Colonial Conspiracies

Those who sense British conspiracy mainly adhere to the thesis that Britain tried to apply a policy of *divide et impera*, or divide and rule policy, on the island of Cyprus. The argument here is that British colonial policy has deliberately played Turkish and Greek Cypriots against one another. The protagonists of this school of thought cite the following acts on behalf of the colonial government to prove their theory:

1. The British decision to divide the school system between Greek (i.e., orthodox Christian) and Turkish (i.e., Muslim) schools (Kitromilides, 1977, p. 171; Kitromilides and Couloumbis, 1976, p. 170);

1 This view is often transported on the horseback of sensational book titles such as 'The Tortured Island' or 'In the Crosshairs of NATO' (Sherman, 1999; Kadritzke and Wagner, 1976).

2. British insistence to give Turkish Cypriots a disproportional share of members in the *Medjlis Idaré* (later Legislative Council) (Yennaris, 2003, p. 20);
3. Introduction of a Turkish staffed riot police (Auxiliary Police) during the EOKA-Period (Mallinson, 2005, p. 26).

All three points should not be easily discarded. Unquestionably, the non-existence of a mixed educational system made any dream of a common Cypriot identity based on a shared understanding of history impossible. Moreover, by sourcing ideas, schoolbooks and teachers from Greece and Turkey, nationalism was imported as well. Conversely, if this is to be called a conspiracy we need to analyse the British motivation to opt for a diverted system. First, we should concede that the Colonial government did not divide the school system in Cyprus, but chose to leave the Ottoman system in place which left religious communities in control. What is more, the British government made the miscalculation that this would avoid racial troubles rather than inspire them. To this effect the Cyprus colonial government celebrated its success in 1913 by asserting that 'the religious question, so pregnant with difficulties in other countries, has been easily solved by the dual school system' (Lukach and Jardine, 1913, p. 137).

There is nothing to suggest that Britain attempted to keep the communities apart in order to stir up trouble or solidify division by means of education. Above all, one must also ask whether an imposed unified – possibly British – educational system would have resulted in a common Cypriot identity. Given the vicinity of the motherlands such a system might well have encountered utter resentment by Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike.

At first sight, the second argument appears more serious. The set-up in the Legislative Council clearly provided for a system that relied on Muslim/Turkish-Cypriot support for the British official members, whose combined votes secured a majority in the assembly. There is no doubt that the Turkish-Cypriot vote could have had a negative effect on Greco-Turkish relations on the island. What we have here is a pattern of British colonialism that can be traced undeniably to many other parts of the British Empire where the deepening of interethnic strife had resulted in Ceylon, Bengal, or Malaysia for instance. Still, in Cyprus, the British could not rely on the Turkish-Cypriot vote. The elected members of the Legislative Council basically shared the aim of paying fewer taxes to the colonial administration and since the Legislative Council decided the budget there was a strong possibility that the system might not have secured the desired automatic vote for the colonial administration. What really prevented Greco-Turkish co-operation was not the constitutional set-up, but the introduction of Greek desires for *Enosis* to the budget discussions (Georghallides, 1979, p. 75). Nevertheless, on a few occasions Turkish-Cypriot members voted with their Greek counterparts. In such cases the British governors, using the instrument of the *King's order in council*, simply by-passed these decisions (Georghallides, 1985, pp. 666-667). As the British Empire was exactly that – a colonial Empire and not a democracy for the benefit of the commonwealth – this should not come as a surprise. As for the question of whether this has contributed to Greco-Turkish division, we have to maintain that since the system was replaced by

the British in 1931 for a more direct and openly undemocratic one, ethnic strife in Cyprus did not increase. If the British had any intention in 1931 to foster Turkish-Cypriot political rights at the expense of the Greek Cypriots, they refrained from doing so and instead the island remained under authoritarian rule until 1960.

The third element quoted as proof of a British divide-and-rule conspiracy is the introduction of a special police force that was staffed by Turkish Cypriots and commanded by British officers.² In terms of results of British policy in Cyprus the ramification has been a devastating one. Images appeared in the local and world press showing Turkish-Cypriot policemen searching Greek houses and fighting against Greek-Cypriot students. The upshot of this could only end in interethnic trouble. Additionally, more Turkish Cypriots were recruited into the regular Cyprus Police Force. However, while the number of Turkish-Cypriot policeman grew, Greek Cypriots still remained in the local security forces in large numbers.³ Apart from British soldiers and government officials, policemen were prime targets of the EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston⁴). As more Turkish Cypriots joined the force, more Turkish-Cypriot policemen were killed which led to the second disastrous effect – Turkish-Cypriot leaders and the press did not report such killings as those of combatants in a guerrilla war, but as Turks murdered by Greeks. The result was that the conflict which began as one between EOKA and the British, then transformed into one between

- 2 In December 1955 the Auxiliary Police Force consisted of 1,009 men; Robins, George Herbert: Reports as Commissioner of Police, Cyprus, 1955-1956, MSS. Medit. s. 9; Progress Report on Development and build up of the Cyprus Police Force, Commissioner and Deputy Governor, 9 December 1955, 'The strength of the Auxiliary Police has risen very slightly and is now 1153, making a total strength in the force of 2997 all ranks', MSS. Medit. s. 9; Progress Report, Development and Expansion of the Cyprus Police Force, Chief of Staff, Office of Commissioner of Police Cyprus and Governor, 10 February 1956. By March 1956 the numbers had risen to 1,172 policemen. MSS. Medit. s. 9; Progress Report, 13 March 1956.
- 3 In 1955 the Cyprus Police Force had 1,003 Greek-Cypriot (54.57%) and 734 Turkish-Cypriot (39.93%) members. In 1958 the ratio was 920 Greek-Cypriots (31%) to 1,429 Turkish Cypriots (47%). At the time of independence the ratio was reduced to 493 Greek-Cypriots (60.64%) and 309 Turkish Cypriots (38.1%). CO 69/59 Administration Reports 1955 Part II; Annual Report on the Cyprus Police Force for the Year 1955 by G.H. Robins, MBE, Commissioner of Police, Cyprus. CO 69/65 Cyprus Administration Reports 1958 Part 2; Annual Report on the Cyprus Police Force for the Year 1958 by John E.S. Brown Esq. OBE, Chief Constable of Cyprus, Nicosia 1959, NA. CO 69/68 Administration Reports 1960 Part I; Annual Report on the Cyprus Gendarmerie Force for the Period 16 August 1960-31 December 1960 by Ahmed Niazi Esq. Commander, Cyprus Gendarmerie. CO 69/59 Administration Reports 1955 Part II; Annual Report on the Cyprus Police Force for the Year 1955 by G.H. Robins, MBE, Commissioner of Police, Cyprus. CO 69/65 Cyprus Administration Reports 1958 Part 2; Annual Report on the Cyprus Police Force for the Year 1958 by John E.S. Brown Esq. OBE, Chief Constable of Cyprus, Nicosia 1959, NA. CO 69/68 Administration Reports 1960 Part I; Annual Report on the Cyprus Gendarmerie Force for the Period 16 August 1960-31 December 1960 by Ahmed Niazi Esq. Commander, Cyprus Gendarmerie.
- 4 Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston (EOKA): National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters.

Greek and Turkish Cypriots.⁵ By 1958 full-scale fighting occurred throughout the island. Did the British anticipate that the enlargement of the police force would provoke this result? A comprehensive study of the Auxiliary Police has still to be undertaken, but what can be said at this stage, is that those responsible for re-organising the Cyprus Police had given surprisingly little thought toward the outcome of changing the ethnical composition of the force. The main arguments cited for expanding Turkish recruitment were:

1. The large number of resignations by Greek-Cypriot policemen, who either felt intimidated by EOKA or shared EOKA's aims.
2. The feeling that some Greek-Cypriot members cooperated with EOKA and were, therefore, deemed unreliable.
3. That Turkish Cypriots, for the same reasons, would prove more loyal (interview with Philis Roushias, Cyprus CID (1940-1955), 14 May 1996).

The main rationale seemed to be to install a loyal police force that could be used against EOKA. John E.S. Brown, Chief Constable of Cyprus, described the unusually high numbers of Turkish Cypriots in the following terms:

'The racial composition of the force normally remains fairly constant as between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. As for the previous two and a half years, however, the racial balance has remained upset because of the emergency and there was still an abnormally high Turkish Cypriot element' (CO 69/65).

Apparently, the idea that a Turkish police force might have negative effects on interethnic relations did not figure highly – if discussed at all – among those who put it in place.

The three points discussed above exemplify the main flaw in the theory of a divide-and-rule conspiracy. British decisions were generally taken with no such policy in mind, yet the outcome served to support this theory.

5 'Until recently there had not been any serious inter-community trouble in Cyprus, although Turkish community feeling had run high on a number of occasions when Turkish Cypriots were injured as a result of terrorist activity'. Mediterranean Department, Colonial Office: The Turkish Community in Cyprus, Brief for Sir Hugh Foot, No. 7, July 1956, Foot papers - Additional MSS; MSS. Medit. s. 35; Box 1/Folder 1 1957 Registry Number 181/2, RHL. 'It is clear that the Turkish Cypriot community is thoroughly incensed and that further EOKA outrages claiming Turkish Cypriot victims are likely to be the occasion for retaliation against Greek Cypriots'. CO 926/422 Confidential, Inter-Communal Strife in Cyprus, J.E. Galsworthy, 15 June 1956, NA. 'Daily Sitrep No. 109 covering period 11/12 Jan. [1956] One Paphos. At 0740 hrs. Turkish Cypriot Police detective shot and killed outside his house. Believed one attacker only. Funeral attended by large crowd but pas[s]ed off peacefully. Two. There were demonstrations by Turkish Cypriots in main towns in Protest against Paphos shooting referred above. Small Incidents reported, incl. Greek Turkish clashes, but generally all were dispersed peacefully'. CO 926/416 Sabotage and Incidents in Cyprus 1955/1956; MIDEAST Main and War Office. MIDEAST Rear. Confidential, 12 January 1956, NA.

British Rule in Cyprus in a Broader Context

Huge emphasis has been placed on Britain's focal role in the Cyprus conflict. In order to put into perspective the British legacy in Cyprus we need to compare the developments on the island with those of the region. Indeed, the island's history differs considerably from neighbouring areas of the former Byzantine and Ottoman Empires.

Major political developments that took place in Anatolia, the Aegean and the Balkans, did not occur in Cyprus precisely because it was occupied by the British. As a consequence, Cyprus and its communities did not experience events like the Cretan uprising, the Balkan Wars, and the Greco-Turkish War. While these areas suffered considerable shifts in their ethnical formation due to the nature of war, ethnical cleansing or 'population exchange', Cyprus remained untouched by such horrors and also continued to be largely unaffected by the first and second World Wars. Few Cypriots joined up to fight since the island's male population was not conscripted to the British Army which accepted volunteers only (Asmussen, 2006).

One effect of the absence of war was, for much of the British period, that national discourses in Cyprus did not have the same brutal side-effects as those in the so-called 'motherlands' (Asmussen, 2001). Violent clashes among Greek and Turkish Cypriots only occurred in a few confined cases in the period up to the mid-1950s (Asmussen, 2004).

Thus, British imperialism in Cyprus served as a buffer that softened nationalistic discourse, however, it did not alleviate the rise of nationalism but rather helped to delay a process that had been completed in the motherlands some thirty years earlier. The British neither tried to deliberately divide the Cypriots, nor attempted to solve the divisions by what the District Commissioner for Famagusta, Bertram John Weston, termed 'creating a Cypriot' (Rhodes House: Weston).⁶ Until 1954 at least, Cyprus had only marginal economic and strategic significance for the Empire. Subsequently, Britain took little interest in the island's development and even less interest in its inhabitants. Robert Holland justly reckoned that 'the truth was that as late as the beginning of 1954 the *beau idea* of British rule in Cyprus was not to be soiled and comprised by involvement in communal politics, but rather to be suspended above it' (1998, p. 67). It was not British foresight and good governance, but rather luck that prevented Cyprus to fall earlier into the trap of nationalism.

Anglo-American Post-Independence Conspiracies – The 1974 Crisis⁷

Due to particular features of the post-independence Cyprus conflict it lent itself easily to mythmaking. The parties involved in the conflict were the NATO Allies, Greece, Turkey, the

6 'I have long maintained that our failure to produce a Cypriot in 79 years is one of the weakest points in our armament ...' Weston, Bertram John: Correspondence 1954-1959 with Colonial Secretary, RHL MSS. Medit. s. 12; BJ. Weston to A.F. John Reddaway, Administrative Secretary, 26 February 1957, RHL.

7 This sub-chapter summarises some of the findings of my recent work on the 1974 war in Cyprus. For a more

United States, and Great Britain. There was also the existence of Europe's biggest Communist Party outside of the Soviet block, the Greek-Cypriot AKEL, and a lingering ethnic conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. This, along with the presence of a United Nations peace force stationed in Cyprus since 1964, provided the perfect background for a considerable number of conspiracy theories to evolve.

Among the theories, the most prominent was the involvement of the United States, especially of Henry Kissinger and the CIA, with the aim of replacing the 'Castro of the Mediterranean', i.e., Makarios, and dividing the island between two NATO allies. Another contains similar explanations of the British involvement.

O'Malley and Craig, for example, in their 'Cyprus Conspiracy' argued 'that the Cyprus crisis was no failure of American diplomacy, but a deliberate Cold War plot to divide the island and save the top secret spying and defence facilities from the twin threats of a communist takeover or British withdrawal' (1999, p. x). Hitchens (1997) and Mallinson (2005) argue in similar ways. The following serve as 'proof' for these theories:

1. The American reluctance to continue to recognise Makarios as the legitimate President of Cyprus.
2. Britain's refusal to intervene on behalf of Makarios and her subsequent negative response to a call by Turkey for joint intervention.

But what is really behind the Cyprus crises of 1974 and what were the principles guiding British and especially American policy towards it? In April 1976 the House of Commons Select Committee on Cyprus published its report and asked the question: 'Why in fact then did not Britain intervene?' It concluded, that 'the full truth will never be known unless and until all official papers of the period can be seen' (House of Commons, 1976, p. ix).

The thirty-year restriction limit on the opening of British Government files for 1974 has now passed and the papers are open for reviewing. Similarly, US files have also been released. Apart from the question of why Britain failed to fulfil its obligation under the Treaty of Alliance other questions need to be addressed such as:

1. Did the US or the British Governments know of the coup in advance?
2. Did both consider intervening on behalf of Makarios?
3. What were Anglo-American attitudes towards the post-coup Government in Cyprus?
4. What did American and British intelligence reveal about Turkish aims and objectives as Turks prepared to land in Cyprus?

detailed account please refer to Jan Asmussen (2008a) *Cyprus at War: Diplomacy and Conflict During the 1974 Crisis*. London: I.B. Tauris.

5. Was there at any point any possibility that British or American troops would engage or confront Turkish ones in order to stop their advance?
6. Were there any combined US/British initiatives to diffuse the crisis before it was too late?

Intelligence on the Coup

Contrary to Kissinger's claim, that the information 'was not exactly lying around the streets', the likelihood of a coup in Cyprus was actually well known. From February 1974, the State Department was aware, based on information gathered by the CIA, that Ioannides was contemplating the removal of Makarios (Constandinos, 2009, p. 375). On 17 May, upon receipt of CIA reports, the State Department Area Specialist for Cyprus, Thomas Boyatt, anticipated trouble in Cyprus and attempted to do something about it. He wrote: 'If the National Guard and EOKA-B succeed in getting rid of Makarios, a direct confrontation between Greece and Turkey would be inevitable' (Nixon: STATE 103030). However, the American Ambassador to Greece, Henry J. Tasca, argued against any strong action and made a low-key representation to the Greek Government instead of talking to the Military who were actually in command in Athens. Tasca, who was basically a Nixon associate, had long been regarded by Kissinger as a mere spokesperson for the Junta (Constandinos, 2009, p. 166). His reluctance to deal with the existent leadership, coupled with Kissinger's indifference on the issue, resulted in the CIA being the only real contact with the Junta. As far as Ioannides was concerned, CIA Station Chief Stanley Hulse, represented the US government, but Hulse is reported to have been shouted at by Ioannides shortly before the coup, an indication that Hulse might have warned him against it (*ibid.*, p. 168).

On 14 July the CIA reported that the leader of the Greek Military Junta, Dimitrios Ioannides, had decided not to intervene, and on 15 July, the day of the actual coup, the CIA summary contained a statement to the same effect. The State Department's ex-post-assessment was that Ioannides had deliberately misled the US Government (Ford: Boyatt to Kissinger).

It seems the intelligence on Cyprus was at best 'conflicting', and Kissinger had no clear forewarning at the time of the coup. Whether individual CIA agents in Athens had encouraged Ioannides to believe that he had American acquiescence remains to be seen when more CIA material is declassified. In any case, involvement on behalf of the Secretary of State can be ruled out. Kissinger had failed to take advice by his department specialists and had, therefore, failed to impress on the Junta earlier that the US would not support the coup. As rumours of a pending coup were frequent, Kissinger did not take them serious enough. CIA Director, William Colby, took part of the blame and enacted a new warning system called the 'Alert Memorandum' (Constandinos, 2009, p. 377).

For the UK side, the British fortnightly Intelligence Summary No 13/74 for the period 19 June-2 July 1974 of the Joint Intelligence Group, did not contain any hint of a possible coup. Regarding Makarios' decision to reduce conscription from two years to fourteen months, and his call on Greece to withdraw its officers from Cyprus, the summary commented:

'To date there is no public comment from the Greek Government either about the Cyprus Government's announcement that members of the Greek regime are behind EOKA-B and Cyprus Government proposed changes in the National Guard' (WO 386/12, Fortnightly Intelligence Summary No 13/74).

The British High Commissioner in Nicosia, Stephen Olver, later stated that 'a coup had always been a possibility' (FCO 9/1914), and John Aiken, the Commander of the British Forces in the Near East, reported that reliable sources had for some time confirmed that a coup was inevitable, but indications were that the plan was to act in October (WO 386/21, p. 13, note 2). Nevertheless, there are no indications that Callaghan took the situation in Cyprus any more serious than Kissinger did. What can be stated here is that while there is little indication that the coup had American or British support, determined action that could have prevented it was pending.

Intervention on behalf of Makarios

US strategies were defined at the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG) meeting of the National Security Council (NSC), on 18 July as follows:

1. Avoiding the exercise of the military option, and thus, a war between Turkey and Greece, or civil war in Cyprus;
2. Minimising Soviet involvement;
3. Avoiding a situation in which the US would be seen as colluding on the side of one NATO ally against the other;
4. Promoting a solution which on Cyprus itself will be in our interests and will not lead either to further instability or increased leftist/east block influence. US Government (USG) shall take no specific position on possible elements of settlement before Sisco's mission is completed.⁸

The WSAG meeting further decided to 'avoid tipping our hand now on the immediate problem of Makarios'. Some scenario involving Makarios' return was not ruled out but depended 'heavily on the attitude of our allies'.

For the moment the immediate US strategy was defined as:

1. Staying in touch with Sisco until consensus ripens;
2. Stalling action at the UN even if Makarios appeared, and depending on what he would say as a result of his talks in London;
3. Keeping a close eye on Turk, Greek and Soviet force dispositions and movements;
4. US Government's public line would 'not now' reflect any specific decision on the fate of

8 Under Secretary Joe Sisco was sent on a shuttle mission between Athens and Ankara to contain the crisis.

Makarios. They were already on record supporting the sovereignty and integrity of Cyprus (Nixon: Memorandum, Brent Scowcroft to Nixon).

The main reason to keep the UN out of the affair remained clearly to forestall a possible Soviet involvement. Kissinger, however, was clearly not a big fan of Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, who he described, a 'horse's ass' during a conversation with his staff a day before the Turkish intervention started (Nixon: Telecon Kissinger/McCloskey).

While the Americans kept a 'wait-and-see policy', the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, had asked the Chief of Staff to evaluate a possible intervention. Nonetheless, it was never taken seriously into consideration. A contingency plan, estimating the need of some 20,000 troops, was drawn up to demonstrate the dangers of such a move rather than contemplating any real preparations. The plan warned that Britain could find itself 'facing an open-ended and expensive situation, similar to Northern Ireland' (PREM 16/19).

Instead three other contingency plans were implemented:

- Op SKYLARK – Evacuation of Makarios. (WO 386/21 Report of the Commander of the British Forces Near East on the Cyprus Emergency, p. 7)
- Op ABLAUT – Reinforcement of SBAs (WO 386/21, Annex C)
- Op PLATYBUS – Replacement of local SBA staff with British military personal (WO 386/21, Annex D)

A total of 2,700 officers and men, tanks and a small armada were despatched to Cyprus, which joined the two regiments already on training there (WO 386/21, Annex C).

Attitude towards the Sampson Government

The reinforcements under Op ABLAUT spawned the most press reports suggesting a possible British intervention. High Commissioner Olver vigorously complained about this, and argued that:

'The new regime backed by the National Guard is now in control of virtually the entire island. Opposition has to all intents and purposes died out. The Police Tactical Reserve has surrendered, and most of its members are under arrest. I discount the possibility of any local uprising to restore Makarios. The National Guard could without difficulties put down any such attempt. Many Cypriots will be sad that Makarios has gone. Many of them have no respect or affection for the new regime. Nevertheless, the regime cannot now be overthrown by any force within Cyprus. Makarios could only re-establish himself with military assistance of some foreign powers. Many people dislike the thought that Sampson has been brought to power on the backs of Greek Military; but there is relief at the disappearance of some aspects of Makarios' regime: his restoration by force would be very far from popular, and would cause more problems locally than it would serve' (WO 386/21, Tel No 230).

It appears that at least Her Majesty's representative in Cyprus recognised the new state of affairs and disapproved of taking any action. Similar observations could be made by reading the first cables coming in from the US ambassador to Cyprus, Roger Davis. Kissinger, however, repeatedly made clear that the US Government would continue to recognise the existing government (Nixon: Telcon Callaghan/Kissinger).

The US Government preferred a solution in which Makarios would be replaced legally by Glafkos Clerides, the President of the House of Representatives. He was the long-standing Greek-Cypriot negotiator during the intercommunal talks and was considered to be much more reasonable than the Archbishop. On 17 July Kissinger told Nixon that the US would 'work for a compromise in which neither Makarios [n]or the other guy [Nikos Sampson] take over' (Nixon: Telcon Nixon/Kissinger: 17 July 1974).

Kissinger's main fear was that Makarios would be accepting a Soviet offer to restore him, which the US could hardly resist (Nixon: Telcon Nixon/Kissinger: 17 July 1974).

Needless to say Kissinger was delighted as Clerides was sworn in as interim President after the Turkish landing in Cyprus. He said to Callaghan that 'although the process had been very painful the present situation was probably a net gain for the West' (FCO 9/1897).

Callaghan, while being sympathetic to the idea, was sceptical as to whether Clerides could cope with the situation in Cyprus. That being the case, Britain did not totally abandon the idea of a possible return of Makarios. British soldiers actually saved the Archbishop's life by putting into force a contingency plan developed in 1972 (WO 386/21 Report of the Commander British Forces Near East on the Cyprus Emergency, p. 7).

Intelligence about the Turkish Aims and Possible Anglo-American Actions

Both British and American Intelligence circles were able to predict Turkish plans. A report directed by the Joint Intelligence Committee – the highest body of the British Secret Services – was presented to the Cabinet on Friday 19 July. This account, just one day before the Turkish intervention shows that Britain knew exactly what the Turkish aims were and explains to some extent Britain's later stance towards her own possible intervention against Turkey. The committee assessed that the Turks would seek to seize the port of Famagusta, the airfield at Tymbou (today Ercan Airport) and finally advance to the Morphou area in the west. It concluded:

'We see the primary military objectives being to achieve a de facto partition of the island, with the Turks occupying the North-East, including the Turkish quarter of Nicosia and the Port of Famagusta. (...) We do not believe that the Greeks could prevent the Turks from attaining their military objectives' (WO 386/21 JIC London to Paris).

The US State Department was doubtless opposed to the partition of Cyprus since it could 'sow the seeds of future Cyprus problems. Greece and Turkey would [just] have another frontier to dispute' (Nixon: Contingency Study for Cyprus).

Unlike 1964 and 1967 the US failed to discourage Turkey's involvement. Instead of issuing strong statements Kissinger confined himself to informing the Turkish Government that the US understood the Turkish concerns but instructed Undersecretary Sisco to make it clear in Ankara that an armed intervention would set in train events which would be damaging to Turkey's long term interests (Nixon: STATE 157127). The USG would take a very serious view towards armed Turkish intervention. This could hardly be understood as a deterrent by the Turks and after Turkish soldiers had landed and advanced in Cyprus, Kissinger realised that he needed to take a stronger stance if he wanted the Turks to agree, at least, to a cease-fire. Subsequently he instructed Sisco to be 'brutally frank' with the Turks (Nixon: STATE 157969).

Sisco had indeed been instructed that 'a central objective of [his] mission' was 'to persuade the Turks to hold off military intervention' (Nixon: Memorandum, Saunders to Kissinger). As the Turks prepared for landing in Cyprus, Kissinger, in a phone conversation with Nixon on 19 July, confessed that 'the only way (...) we could have done it [i.e., stop the Turks] was by being more threatening which we weren't. We were maybe too pleading but frankly we didn't think they'd move this fast' (Nixon: Telcon, Kissinger/Nixon, 19 July 1974).

In sum, Kissinger misjudged the situation and failed to take a firmer stand on the issue. After the Turks started to move he could only try to mend the situation by suggesting a quick replacement of Sampson by Clerides or consent to partition. To Defence Secretary James A. Schlesinger he said 'we will work for double enosis or for Clerides, whichever works out' (Nixon: Telcon, Schlesinger/Kissinger).

Likelihood of British (American)/Turkish Confrontation

The main prevailing principle of American and British policy throughout the crisis was to prevent war between Greece and Turkey. In order to do so Britain seriously considered stopping Turkey's advance. The main consideration behind this was that the newly installed Karamanlis Government in Greece might not survive if Turkey tried to divide the island. In this case as Sir Robin Hooper, HM Ambassador in Athens cautioned, referring to information from the spokesman of the Greek Government before the 2nd Geneva Conference:

'Karamanlis Government might be replaced by a military one. This might be followed after the inevitable defeat by civil war from which there might emerge a left-wing Government under Papandreou which would withdraw from NATO and either declare neutrality or take Greece into the Soviet block' (WO 386/21 Report of the Commander British Forces Near East on the Cyprus Emergency, p. 65).

However, Britain was not prepared to confront Turkey alone – The preferred British scenario would have been a joint action by UNFICYP, the British Forces in Cyprus and the US Sixth Fleet in order to stop the Turkish advance. Despite this there were at least three occasions in which a major confrontation between British and Turkish forces were stopped at the very last minute.

These were:

- The evacuation of Kyrenia of British and foreign nationals (22-23 July);
- The confrontation between UNFICYP and Turkish troops at Nicosia Airport (24 July);
- The proposed blockade of Turkish reinforcements and Turkish advance under UN authorisation (23/25/30 July/10 August).

In light of Turkish cease fire violations Britain considered to impose a joint Anglo-American blockade on sea traffic to northern Cyprus. It was assessed that 'present Royal Navy forces were adequate for the blockade but that if the Turks were to use all the forces at their disposal the blockade might be unable to guarantee 100% effectiveness. US Sixth Fleet assistance would make the task much easier' (FCO 9/1901 Callaghan to UKMIS).

Regardless, the US answer was that they 'would in no circumstances use force or the threat of force to deter Turkey' (FCO 9/1901 Richard, UKMIS New York to FCO). Unlike the British the Americans, notably Kissinger, did not believe that Greece would at that stage go to war with Turkey. Subsequently an armed American engagement was not needed to prevent a major NATO crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean. Secondly, Kissinger made a total miscalculation on his personal influence on Ecevit. Ecevit had taken courses as a student of the Secretary at Harvard, consequently Kissinger tried to play on this teacher-student relationship and failed to see the Turkish determination to go ahead.

Finally Callaghan judged that any naval force even as part of UNFICYP would open the door to most unwelcome questions on the UNFICYP mandate. Following this, the Royal Navy Task Group already standing by at Cape Andreas was ordered to withdraw. Another proposal for a blockade was put forward by UN General Prem Chand who on 25 July suggested a UN operation cordon around the cease fire line in order to deter a Turkish break-out towards Kythrea and perhaps Famagusta. Even though the proposal found British support it failed to get Waldheim's approval, who argued that this was not covered by UNFICYP's mandate. A final debate on possible British/UNFICYP intervention was initiated by Callaghan on 10 August suggesting the strong reinforcement of Peacekeepers. The aim was now only deterrence, since the Turks had reached a force level which made effective opposition almost impossible. Nonetheless, by that time British policy had changed: During a meeting held early on 14 August between the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary and the Chief of Staff it was decided that 'HMG's policy should be one of a long diplomatic haul and that we would continue to maintain a low key military posture concentrating upon the security of our Sovereign Base Areas and our own nationals'. The main reason for this shift may well be connected to the fact that Callaghan had now joined Kissinger in his conviction that Greece would not go to war with Turkey anyway (WO 386/21 Report of the Commander British Forces Near East on the Cyprus Emergency, p. 85).

Failure at Geneva – The American Cantonal Proposal

While Kissinger and Callaghan tried to streamline their policies at the beginning of the Second Geneva Conference (8-13 August 1974), they ultimately failed. Callaghan still believed that only a strong deterrent could prevent Turkey from taking by force what she could not acquire at the negotiation table. In the wake of the conference it became apparent that the Greek side was totally opposed to a federal solution, which would lead to the partition of Cyprus into separate Greek and Turkish zones. Such a solution, which would include the exchange of population, was for a long time the main Turkish target.

Kissinger, who later stated that there was 'no American reason why the Turks should not have one-third of Cyprus' (Ford: Memorandum of conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft), realised that there was no progress at the conference table. He, therefore, decided to bring forward his own proposal: a cantonal solution. He explained this new approach in a phone conversation with President Ford on 10 August as follows:

'The Turks propose two areas – one Turkish – one Greek. I think the Greeks we can push into a position where they would be willing to accept two or three autonomous Turkish areas but not one contiguous area. That would avoid population transfer' (Ford: Telecon, Ford/Kissinger).

The next day Kissinger wrote to Ecevit and suggested that:

'your Government could consider two or three well-defined Turkish areas rather than one single geographic zone' (Ford: STATE 175382).

The US Ambassador to Ankara, William B. Macomber, submitted the text to Ecevit on the morning of 11 August. He actually drew possible lines for the proposed canton on a map and suggested 'one or two major cantons' and up to four smaller ones. Ecevit – as Macomber was drawing – became 'more interested in some lines' and finally accepted considering an alternative arrangement of this kind (Ford: ANKARA 6412). The Turks swiftly started to work on the proposal and came up with a cantonal solution during the evening of the same day (6.30 p.m.) in a message to Kissinger. The Turkish proposal foresaw that Turkish-Cypriot administration zones should be formed in one-third of the island. There should be one main zone, which should immediately be defined and adopted for Turkish-Cypriot administration amounting to about 17% of the total area of Cyprus. Additionally, the Turks proposed five cantons in Lefka, Polis, Paphos, Larnaca, and Karpasia. The exact demarcations and areas of the cantons proposed were to be defined later by a commission of experts (Ford: ANKARA 6414).

Kissinger was very keen to point out that the entire idea was not an American proposal as had been leaked through the press. He instructed Macomber early in the process to impress this on the Turks (Ford: STATE 175402). However, when Ecevit answered to Kissinger, he began by saying, 'we have studied your proposal', which left no doubt about the origin of the cantonal idea (Ford: ANKARA 6414).

When the Turks finally presented the proposal at Geneva, it took all parties by surprise. Neither the British, nor the Greek and Greek-Cypriots had been forewarned. Subsequently, the affair was viewed as an unacceptable ultimatum rather than a suitable compromise. Callaghan was evidently angry and asked the Americans whether they regarded him as a dummy (FCO 9/1922: Doc 67). As a consequence, the British did not push for the cantonal solution and favoured the federal model. Thus, the American initiative failed to gain any support because of the obvious lack of US diplomatic preparations in Athens and London.

Kissinger ultimately tried to pin the blame on the British. On 13 August, as the conference was drawing to an end, he told President Ford that the US had tried to 'bail' the Cyprus situation out after it got out of control. 'The British have made a mess of it' (Ford: Memorandum of conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 9 a.m., 13 August 1974). About a week later in a conversation with Cyrus Vance, Kissinger claimed that the Americans had been 'extremely forbearing' with the British. He continued to say that 'they insisted that we had the problem solved. They did not want us to send anybody to Geneva. We did not realize until Monday that there was going to be a blow-up. Callaghan had made some threatening statements. I had put forward a proposal that I thought the Turks would accept. Callaghan went through the roof that I put forward a proposal so that made the Greeks reject it' (FOIA).

In fact, a unique opportunity was lost, not because the British were messing it up, but because the Americans failed to file the British in time to develop a strategy under which the Greek side might have accepted a solution which would have been much better than what followed: A second round of fighting which resulted in the violent partition of Cyprus and in thousands of people becoming refugees.

Confusion instead of Conspiracy

To recapitulate to this point, the US Government had conflicting evidence on the coup and the CIA was probably misled by the Greek colonels. Britain had no idea when exactly a coup d'état would take place – but she knew that it might come. Neither the US nor Britain did consider intervening on behalf of Makarios. The Ambassadors on the ground, for some hours or days, even deliberated acknowledging the coupist Sampson Government. The US Government favoured the replacement of Sampson by Clerides instead of a return of Makarios. British and American Intelligence reports revealed knowledge of the objectives of the Turkish military operations in advance. US contingency planning was opposed to the 'partition' of Cyprus since it would continue to form a bone of contention between Greece and Turkey and in light of the danger of a Greco-Turkish war and its negative repercussions on NATO's southern flank the Wilson Government was prepared to halt a Turkish advance. As the danger of war waned, Britain abandoned the idea of intervention altogether. The US Government was at no point prepared to intervene and confront vital NATO allies. Add to that the fact that Henry Kissinger did not believe there was a real danger of a Greco-Turkish war. Moreover, he trusted his diplomatic skills

and ability to contain the Turks through personal conversations with his 'student' Bülent Ecevit. The US Government convinced the Turks to abandon their aim of partition in favour of a cantonal solution, but the affair, like the entire crisis, was so badly handled that the outcome of the initiative led to the rejection by all other parties. The fact that the Cyprus crisis (15 July-16 August 1974) coincided with the climax of the Watergate scandal (Nixon resigned on 8 August 1974) must be taken into account as well when we judge the measures taken by the American government towards Cyprus. The scandal left the White House in political limbo and while Nixon was struggling for his political survival, the real power lay in the hands of Henry Kissinger, and his style of 'secret' foreign policy frequently antagonised American allies and American diplomats alike. Kissinger, who developed a kind of paranoia regarding leaking information from State Department officials, preferred running Foreign Affairs within his own trusted 'kitchen cabinet'. He frequently neglected expert advice on behalf of his departmental staff (Ford: Boyatt to Kissinger). All US contingency planning was based on the assumption that the US could contain any conflict in Cyprus before it could evolve (Nixon: Contingency Study for Cyprus). There was no contingency planning for a failure to do so. Having said that, US policy, faced with this event had run out of options and the result was a terrible debacle.

The Function of Conspiracy Theories in Cypriot Historiography

Conspiracy theories can mainly develop in areas where hard evidence is lacking or withheld by interested parties. Freedom of information acts that are in place in much of Europe and North America have resulted in a great deal of revelations that pointed to real conspiracies by Western governments. The US involvement in Latin America and Asia (United Fruit/Honduras/Guatemala [Bucheli, 2005], Cambodia, Chile [US Congress, 94th Congress]) has supported the view that there are still a lot of details to discover about the handling of international affairs on behalf of the Americans during the Cold War years. In spite of that, those revelations have also proven that American foreign policy in the 1970s was orientated towards a perceived self-interest, rather than driven by an overall paranoia against communism. In the case of British colonialism a closer look toward American interest in the region is needed in order to evaluate what happened in Cyprus. It is amazing how many scholars and individuals have treated the island as a cosmos in its own right. The two British military bases and the American surveillance installations were defined as vital for western interest without defining what that interest actually was. There is a widespread tendency both among Cypriots and those dealing with the history of the island to view it as a focal point of international attention. As a result, they fail to see that international powers might have quite a different perspective. In fact, military installations in Cyprus were not of vital importance for American strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean. What was vital, were the installations the USA had in Turkey (Asmussen, 2008b). As the Soviet Union showed no initiatives to engage in Cyprus, the Americans did not promote any specific set-up for the future of the island – as long as it remained in the Western sphere. Consequently, since 1968, Turkish and

Greek Cypriots had considerable leverage regarding the possible shape of a common state in Cyprus. Neither superpower forced them to adopt a specific model of governance.

The conspiracy theories that exist about Cyprus would suggest the exact opposite: the image is one of an innocent island with an idle population that has fallen victim to international powers. The merits of this view are obvious – if there was a conspiracy, the sole responsibility for the Cyprus problem rests with aliens. Thus, conspiracy theories serve as a remedy for those who do not wish to engage in discussions as to how wrongdoings on behalf of Cypriots have attributed to the present situation. As those conspiracy theories have unmistakably failed the litmus test of archival research, it is time to move on to a far more difficult task which is that of establishing truth and reconciliation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

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