

# Fabric rationing in Limassol during the Second World War, as part of British Colonial policy: A look from the Municipal Archive of Limassol

NOLY MOYSSI,<sup>1</sup> BARBARA STIVAROU<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

*Rationing and price fixing was implemented by many countries during the course of the Second World War, that affected the distribution of supplies such as food, fuel and textiles. This was done in order to avoid price gouging and the creation of black markets, even though the measures were implemented black markets still arose from the start of the war. Cyprus was a colony of the British Empire at the time, and imperial legislation that implemented rationing was enacted on the island. This article focuses on the rationing policy of the British in Limassol through the use of archival material dating to 1943 from the Municipal Archive of Limassol in order to demonstrate the implementation of this policy to the city. Additionally, a glimpse of the problems of the policy can be observed through the press of the time, where textile merchants, tailors and civilians expressed their opinions on the rationing system.*

**Keywords:** rationing, Second World War, British Empire, British Colonies, textile rationing, black market, Limassol, Cyprus

## Introduction

The Second World War has been extensively studied but mostly through the lens of military action, economic studies are not dominant in the field and they have focused on austerity measures in western European nations such as the United Kingdom and Ireland. Furthermore, textile rationing during wartime has also seen a limited amount of study, especially outside of the large European powers and within the colonial context. Cyprus offers a unique perspective of the implementation of British policy on rationing during war time since Cyprus was a British colony and Cypriots who participated as volunteers in the war at the same time sought self-determination from the Empire and a union with Greece. The present article will use primary source-

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr Noly Moyssi, Historical Archive Administrator, Paticheion Municipal Museum, Historical Archives, Research Center of Limassol.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Stivarou, MA candidate, University of Cyprus.

es, that includes correspondence between government officials, from the Municipal Archive of Limassol for the year 1943, laws enacted by the Colonial Government and economic information published in the Cyprus Gazette and the Cyprus Blue Books and newspapers published in the Cypriot press at the same time that detailed the way rationing was implemented, price fixing of certain commodities, such as cashmere, the creation of black markets and the effects the measures had on the local people.

## Historic Context

### *Second World War*

The Second World War started on the 1 of September 1939 and ended on 2 September 1945, with different end dates for the Eastern and Western front and the Pacific theater. The war was fought between the Axis Powers, made up of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Imperial Japan and their satellite states and the Allies, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France and the United States, their allies as well as their imperial possessions, such as Cyprus. The location of Cyprus kept it away from any serious fighting during the war, the German Airforce bombed some strategic British bases on the island with a few British casualties. Still Cyprus was heavily involved in the war through the Cyprus Regiment and the Cypriot Voluntary Force, that were made up of all Cypriots, Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites and Latins that fought in many important battles such as the Battle of Monte Cassino, the Battle of El Alamein etc. The participation of Cypriots was mostly due to economic reasons, since the British provided a decent pay at the time, the fight against fascism on the part of members of AKEL and the aspirations of the Greek-Cypriots for independence from Britain and union with Greece.<sup>3</sup> At the height of the war the Greek-Cypriot side tried through various ways to petition the British government, in one instance in 1943 most of the Greek-Cypriot Municipal Council members, from almost all the Municipalities and headed by the Archbishop of Cyprus Leontios, sent a telegram to the PM Churchill in order to petition for the union of Cyprus with Greece, stressing that since Greece and Cyprus had a significant participation in the war effort, on the

---

<sup>3</sup> Georgios Kazamias, Military Recruitment and Selection in a British Colony: The Cyprus Regiment 1939-1944 in Elizabeth A. Close, George Couvalis, Michalēs Tsianikas (eds), *Greek Research in Australia: Proceedings of the Sixth Biennial International Conference of Greek Studies, Flinders University June 2005* (Flinders University Department of Languages - Modern Greek: Adelaide, 2007) 333-342; Panagiotis Dimitrakis, The Special 'Operations Executive and Cyprus in the Second World War' (2009) 45(2) *Middle Eastern Studies* 316; Alexios Alecou. *Communism and Nationalism in Postwar Cyprus, 1945-1955 Politics and Ideologies Under British Rule* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 26.

side of the allies that espoused democracy. Therefore, after the war Cyprus should be granted self-determination and the option to unite with Greece.<sup>4</sup>

*The economic situation during the war, rationing and black markets*

During the course of the war there was a widespread scarcity of clothes and other commodities, this was created in part by the diversion of manpower and materials to war production, the allied blockades of Germany and Italy that restricted trade routes and ports in order to deprive them of supplies such as minerals, metals, food and textiles. More specifically the supply of textiles was affected by the vast amount of clothing used for the soldiers and the confiscation of fabric reserves of countries occupied by Germany.<sup>5</sup> Germany controlled the economy in all the countries it occupied in order to minimize their consumption and outsource their production towards the German war effort, for example in the Netherlands, Germany appropriated the scant coal production that led to a fuel shortage and consequently even harsher conditions during the winter with wide scale famine.<sup>6</sup>

The restriction of free trade and the diversion of material for the war effort led to shortages, disturbances in production and distribution and inevitably steep jumps in prices, that forced the governments to impose price control and rationing in order to stop profiteering and the creation of black markets. These measures were implemented in all countries of the world, since large parts of the world remained under European colonial administration and were therefore affected by the situation even if they were geographically distant to the major theaters of war. Rationing was implemented throughout the duration of the Second World War and continued for some years after its conclusion since the production capabilities could not cover the expected demand.<sup>7</sup> For example in Northern Ireland rationing lasted between 1941 and 1949 while in the Republic of Ireland from 1942 to 1948,<sup>8</sup> in the United King-

---

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, 'Η μόνη μας αξίωσις' *Εσπερινή* [Evening], 10 April 1943, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ralf Futselaar, *Lard, lice and longevity: the standard of living in occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940-1945* (Vol. 1). (Amsterdam University Press 2008) 96; Faith M. Williams, 'Price control and rationing in foreign countries during the War' (1945) 61 *Monthly Labor Review* 882.

<sup>6</sup> Ralf Futselaar, *Lard, lice and longevity: the standard of living in occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940-1945* (Vol. 1). (Amsterdam University Press 2008) 90.

<sup>7</sup> Faith M. Williams, 'Price control and rationing in foreign countries during the War' (1945) 61 *Monthly Labor Review* 882.

<sup>8</sup> Orla Fitzpatrick, 'Coupons, Clothing and Class: The Rationing of Dress in Ireland, 1942–1948' (2014) 48(2) *Costume*, 236.

dom food rationing began in 1940 and continued until 1954.<sup>9</sup> In the United Kingdom people were given ration books and limits were imposed on various products such as bacon, butter, sugar and meat.<sup>10</sup> Rationing began on the supply of food but was later extended to all necessities such as fuel and textiles.

Although the intended target was to avoid the creation of black markets, they still sprung up just as quick as rationing was implemented.<sup>11</sup> In general prices for textiles saw a dramatic increase due to shortages, for example, in Britain the price of clothing rose an average of 175% from pre-war levels in May 1941.<sup>12</sup> In Denmark and the Netherlands there was a clothing shortage, by the end of the German occupation most children owned only one set of underwear.<sup>13</sup> In Cyprus the price of textiles also saw an increase and the creation of black markets helped to quickly steer the prices higher than ever before.<sup>14</sup>

Clothing rationing was introduced in Britain with the Civilian Clothing Order of 1942 that regulated the manufacture and distribution of clothing.<sup>15</sup> While in Ireland on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1942 with the Emergency Powers Order.<sup>16</sup> In Denmark textile rationing came late in the war, in 1944, and until then the poorer members of society were affected by textile shortages. The Netherlands implemented textile rationing very early in the war, starting from 5 August 1940.<sup>17</sup> In Iraq, which was under British occupation, textile rationing was implemented in 1944.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Christina Savvas, Panikos Panayiotou, *Queens of Amathus* (LGK in the Community, 2019) 33.

<sup>10</sup> Christina Savvas, Panikos Panayiotou, *Queens of Amathus* (LGK in the Community, 2019) 33.

<sup>11</sup> Christina Savvas, Panikos Panayiotou, *Queens of Amathus* (LGK in the Community, 2019) 33.

<sup>12</sup> Peter McNeil, "Put Your Best Face Forward': The Impact of the Second World War on British Dress" (1993) 6(4) *Journal of Design History*, 284.

<sup>13</sup> Ralf Futselaar, *Lard, lice and longevity: the standard of living in occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940-1945* (Vol. 1). (Amsterdam University Press 2008) 89.

<sup>14</sup> Central Economic Office of AKEL, 'Η διανομή κασμηριών' [The distribution of woolen textiles] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 16 October 1943, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Peter McNeil, "Put Your Best Face Forward': The Impact of the Second World War on British Dress" (1993) 6(4) *Journal of Design History*, 283.

<sup>16</sup> Peter McNeil, "Put Your Best Face Forward': The Impact of the Second World War on British Dress" (1993) 6(4) *Journal of Design History*, 236.

<sup>17</sup> Ralf Futselaar, *Lard, lice and longevity: the standard of living in occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940-1945* (Vol. 1). (Amsterdam University Press 2008) 96.

<sup>18</sup> Simon Eliot, Marc Wiggam (eds) *Allied Communication to the Public During the Second World War: National and Transnational Networks* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) 191.

## The situation in Cyprus

### *The Cypriot economy and the textile industry*

The textile industry was already globalized due to the industrial revolution and European imperialism, when the war broke out the trade and import of fibers, such as cotton was already common within the European market<sup>19</sup> and Cyprus' position within the British Empire had created close trade links with India and other textile manufacturing nations.<sup>20</sup> In 1938 Cyprus imported cotton mainly from Britain and India as well as other parts of the British Empire such as Palestine and European countries like Germany and Poland.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, large amounts of artificial silk were imported from the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan and Syria.<sup>22</sup> For example, the import of woolen goods was doubled from 1934 to 1938, in a similar fashion, the import of cotton and silk was expanded during this time. Natural fibers as well as artificial fibers such as artificial silk were imported.<sup>23</sup> Locally Cyprus produced wool, cotton, flax fiber, hemp fiber and silk,<sup>24</sup> these items were also exported from the island.<sup>25</sup> Cyprus continued to export goods during the course of the war, in 1941, it exported farm animals, agricultural produce, tobacco, spirits, timber, wool and various minerals such as asbestos, gold ore and terra umbra.<sup>26</sup>

The economic conditions in Cyprus were partly worsened during this time, but at the same time the war created new industries related to the army that employed many locals. The 1940's were also a period of intense labour organizing and striking on the part of the Cypriot workers,<sup>27</sup> the strikes were due to the dissatisfaction of the people for the high price index and the policies enacted by the Government for the prices of clothing, food, fuel and shoes. Added to that, were the aspirations of the Cypriots for more political freedoms and calls for self-determination and union with Greece. The Colonial Government didn't take well with the calls for strikes by the labor unions,

---

<sup>19</sup> Ralf Futselaar, *Lard, lice and longevity: the standard of living in occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940-1945* (Vol. 1). (Amsterdam University Press 2008) 96.

<sup>20</sup> *The Cyprus Blue Book*, 1938, 234.

<sup>21</sup> *The Cyprus Blue Book*, 1938, 288.

<sup>22</sup> *The Cyprus Blue Book*, 1938, 291.

<sup>23</sup> *The Cyprus Blue Book*, 1938, 242.

<sup>24</sup> *The Cyprus Blue Book*, 1938, 412-415.

<sup>25</sup> *The Cyprus Blue Book*, 1938, 426-427.

<sup>26</sup> *The Cyprus Gazette*, 1941, 122.

<sup>27</sup> Alexis Rappas, *The Labor Question in Colonial Cyprus, 1936-1941: Political Stakes in a Battle of Denominations* (2009) 76 *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 194.

replying that, they would hinder the war effort and that anyone who participated in the strikes would be prosecuted, they were also satisfied that the measures enacted by the government were enough to provide for the people.<sup>28</sup> While on the issue of Enosis, the British considered it to be the strongest ‘trump card’ to control the will of Greece and anticipated strong reactions from the part of the Greek government, but in the end the Greek side did not exert any pressure on the issue of Cyprus.<sup>29</sup>

### *Legal Framework*

Cyprus became a British possession ruled by a High Commissioner in 1878, and in 1925 the island became a Crown Colony and was ruled by a Governor.<sup>30</sup> At the start of the Second World War, the Governor of Cyprus was William Denis Battershill (4 July 1939 – 3 October 1941) and then for most of the war Charles Campbell Woolley (3 October 1941 – 24 October 1946).<sup>31</sup> The British Empire implemented new emergency legislation starting from 1939 that was also extended into its colonial possessions, such legislation enacted in Cyprus was the Emergency Powers (Colonial Defence) Order in Council, 1939, the Emergency Powers (Colonial Defence) (Amendment) Order in Council, 1940, and the Emergency Powers (Colonial Defence) (Amendment) Order in Council, 1942. These laws were published in the Cyprus Gazette.<sup>32</sup> Parts of the aforementioned laws dealt with the regulation of the prices of various commodities such as barley, kerosene, carobs as well as fabrics. Laws regulating the sale of textiles remained in force even after the war, in a similar fashion to many other countries, such an example is the Defence (Sale of Government Clothing and other Textiles) Order, 1946 that specified laws governing approved retail prices for textiles, the issuing of clothing booklets and approved retailers.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Anonymous, ‘Η κυβέρνηση εισηγήθη εις τας εργατ. συντεχνίας αναθεώρισιν της αποφάσεως των δια απεργίαν’ [The government has suggested to the labor unions to recall their decision on striking] *Ελευθερία* [*Eleftheria*], 26 August 1943, 1; Anonymous, ‘Συνέντευξις του Δημάρχου Λεμεσού μετά του Αποικιακού Γραμματέως’ [Interview of the Mayor of Limassol with the Colonial Secretary], *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 30 December 1943, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Procopis Papastratis, *British Policy Towards Greece During the Second World War 1941-1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Cyprus. Handbook prepared under the direction of the historical section of the Foreign Office. No. 65* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920) 13.

<sup>31</sup> Clement Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 7; *The Cyprus Gazette*, 1 January 1943, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Supplement No. 3 to *The Cyprus Gazette* No. 2806 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1940. Subsidiary legislation, 899, no. 95.

<sup>33</sup> Supplement No. 3 to *The Cyprus Gazette* No. 3220 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1946. Subsidiary legislation, 114 no.95.

The government created various offices such as the Office of the Controller of Supplies in Nicosia that were tasked with the implementation of the economic policy and rationing and approved any importations into Cyprus.<sup>34</sup> The Municipalities had frequent correspondence with the Controller of Supplies for various matters including the distribution of textiles, some letters are currently held at the Municipal Archive of Limassol and will be detailed later on. Furthermore, the colonial government created the Office of Complaints for the Black Market existed in Cyprus, where consumers could file complaints, but it run parallel to the actual black market<sup>35</sup>

After the British Colonial government, power rested on the shoulders of Municipal Committees and Mayors, the Mayor of Limassol was Ploutis Servas who served from 1943 to 1949, a notable communist politician who also acted as the General Secretary of the CPC in the years 1936-1944 and later of AKEL between 1941-1945.<sup>36</sup> Generally, the implementation of new laws and higher taxes was not taken well by the people, labor unions organized strikes and Ploutis Servas, met with the Colonial Secretary sir Hugh Foot, who later became the last Governor of Cyprus, where 'he stressed the need to lift all the freedom-limiting laws and to provide political freedoms to the people'.<sup>37</sup>

### *Rationing in Cyprus*

The British Empire in order to combat the lack of resources and by consequence the creation of a black market that would inflate prices, created a system of rations to sell at a fixed price various needed items, including textiles. Since Cyprus was part of the British Empire, these policies were also implemented on the island. Even though rationing of food was implemented the prices of bread and spirits kept rising due to scarcity. A black market quickly formed for both food and clothing.<sup>38</sup> Illegal activities were not committed only by the citizens but also from the side of the muhtar and the grocers in both the villagers and the towns, who allocated rations at their

---

<sup>34</sup> The Cyprus Blue Book, 1946, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous, 'Η διανομή κασμηριών' [The distribution of cashmere], *Ανεξάρτητος [Independent]*, 16 October 1943, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Panagiotis Dimitrakis, The Special 'Operations Executive and Cyprus in the Second World War' (2009) 45(2) Middle Eastern Studies 322; Alexios Alecou. *Communism and Nationalism in Postwar Cyprus, 1945-1955 Politics and Ideologies Under British Rule* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 16, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Anonymous, 'Συνέντευξις του Δημάρχου Λεμεσού μετά του Αποικιακού Γραμματέως' [Interview of the Mayor of Limassol with the Colonial Secretary], *Ανεξάρτητος [Independent]*, 30 December 1943, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous, 'Νέα Λεμεσού' [Limassol News] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ [New Cypriot Guardian]*, 5 May 1943, 1.

whims giving more to some and less to others, leaving people with less than enough to survive. This corruption led to pleas in the newspapers of the time for stricter and frequent checks from the authorities in order to have a just allocation of rations.<sup>39</sup> In response the British Colonial Government created the Office of Complaints for the Black Market in late 1942, where citizens could go and give any information they had on black market activities such as price gouging and illegal selling of rationed items at higher prices. By January 1943, just two months after its establishment, the office had examined over 100 cases, 60 of them led to convictions, the payment of a sum of £620 and prison sentences of three or more years.<sup>40</sup>

The Governor of Cyprus announced through the press that committees would be set up in each district, city and village to regulate the distribution of textiles. More specifically the head of each household would receive a form, where they would record their needs for clothing and footwear. There was an order of priority: a) those who needed the fabrics immediately (B) those that needed the fabrics before the end of 1943 and (c) those that could receive them in 1944. This list was also sent to the Controller of Supplies.<sup>41</sup> Each municipality of the island was responsible to supply its own citizens with the rationed supplies, citizens were registered in the municipality and were separated into different categories, such as students and pregnant women, in order to better cover the people who were most in needed. They were additionally separated by neighborhood. For example, the Head of Education announced on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 1943 that 50,000 primary school students would be provided with fabrics at cost price, additionally, he secured ca. 350,000 cubits of aladja and other fabrics and that they would also make shoes for the students.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the government announced through different newspapers that women in the seventh month of pregnancy should visit a government doctor to acquire a certificate with which they could buy 10 yards of capot from the closest government distribution center.<sup>43</sup> In Limassol

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous, *Ανεξέλεγκτος η εις τας πόλεις και χωριά διανομή διαφόρων χρειώδων του βίου* [The distribution of various necessities of life in the cities and villages is uncontrollable] *Φωνή της Κύπρου* [Voice of Cyprus], 15 May 1943, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ch. G. 'Το γραφείο παραπόνων προς καταπολέμησιν της μαύρης αγοράς' [Office of complaints for the combat of the black market] *Ανεξάρτητος* [Independent], 14 January 1943, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Anonymous, 'Ποιον το σχέδιον διανομης ειδών ιματισμού και υποδήσεως' [What is the distribution plan of clothing and footwear] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ* [New Cypriot Guardian], 30 May 1943, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous, 'Η χθεσινή συνεδρία του Ελλην. Εκπαιδευτ. Συμβουλίου' [Yesterday's meeting of the Greek Education Council] *Ελευθερία* [Eleftheria], 10 April 1943, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, 'Κάμποτ δια τας εγκύους γυναίκας' [Capot for pregnant women] *Κυπριακός Τύπος* [Cypriot Press], 18 April 1943, 2; Anonymous, 'Κάμποτ δι' εγγύους μητέρας' [Capot for pregnant women],



the distribution of capot to pregnant women and black tippet to priests started on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1943 at the office of the Cooperative Bank.<sup>44</sup>

### The Distribution of Fabrics in Limassol

As mentioned before the chief authority for the distribution of textiles was the Municipalities, in the case of Limassol, the Municipality under the Mayor Ploutis Servas. While the Office of the Controller of Supplies regulated how much fabric was entitled to each person. At the same time the fabric was sold by the meter and could not exceed the quantity for the sewing of one suit or as it is called in the letter of the Controller mr Joanides 'one full costume/μιας πλήρους φορεσιάς'. Because the measurements varied, the Office had decided on 19½ - 20 pics per piece as an average price. The Controller sent a letter to inform all the District commissioners.<sup>45</sup>

THE OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER OF SUPPLIES.

Nicosia 26th August 1943

No. 12414.

To all Commissioners,

Further to my letter No. BJS/490/B of the 21st August 1943, I have to inform you that the average length of the local cloth mentioned therein is 19½ - 20 pics per piece, as contracted with weavers.

In order to avoid any complaints on shortages from Committees and the public, and as the actual measuring and cutting will be carried out mostly by amateurs, it has been decided that this local cloth should be issued on the basis of 19½ pics per piece, thus allowing a margin of up to half a pic per piece.

I consider that this information should be made available to Committees when issuing out the cloth.

(Sgd) Joanides

For Controller of Supplies.

The tailors were some of the small manufacturers especially affected by textile shortages and steep prices, since there was a shortage of lining and capot. In 1943

---

*Πάφος [Paphos]*, 22 April 1943, 1; Anonymous, *Κάποτ δια τας εγκόους γυναίκακς* [Capot for pregnant women], *Χρόνος [Time]*, 24 April 1943, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Anonymous, *Νέα Λεμεσού* [Limassol News] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ* [*New Cypriot Guardian*], 20 April 1943, 1.

<sup>45</sup> MAL 572/225/41/1.

the Controller of Supplies gave one fabric roll of capot to each licensed tailor that was soon exhausted, and the Central Committee of Tailors, that represented 500 tailors, asked for an audience with the Controller of Supplies in order to petition for another distribution of capot, their call was not answered by the government.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, from the press, we learn that the Central Committee of Tailors declined an offer of 2000 jackets of capot since the government offered 2 shillings per item, that corresponded to 18 piastres, which was considered excessive by the Board. Instead they offered 13.5 piastres per piece which was turned down by the department.<sup>47</sup>

The distribution of textiles within the city of Limassol was divided by parish, such as Agia Triada, Arnaoudia, Tzami Tzetit/Agίου Antoniou, Tsiflikkoudia, Agios Nikolaos, Agios Antonis, Agia Zoni, Agia Katholiki, Agia Napa etc. Furthermore, each parish was subdivided into groups, for Arnaoudia the first group was 1-100, the second 101-200 and the third 201-315. Each group was given rations on a specific date and the rations were collected by the authorities 3-4 days later. In Arnaoudia the first group was issued rations on the 23 of September 1943 and the rations were collected by the people on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The next group got rations the next day and so on.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Municipal Archive of Limassol as a historical source**

The Patticheion Municipal Museum, Historical Archives, Research Center of Limassol houses the Municipal Archive of Limassol from the time of the British occupation to the early years of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus and offers a unique view into the inner workings of the Municipality of the city during the colonial period.

The file with number 225/41 titled 'Fabrics' (Υφάσματα) dated from January to December 1943 includes 59 pieces of paper, within them are various letters of correspondence between the Mayor of Limassol, various Associations of textile sellers and tailors, the Commissioner of Limassol and the Controller of Supplies as well as announcements from the mayor and other authorities, some of them are in Greek while others are in English.

#### *Parties involved in the distribution of textiles in Limassol*

In the distribution of textiles a range of different authorities were involved, starting from the top, which was part of the colonial administration of the island, there

---

<sup>46</sup> Anonymous, '500 ράπται ζητούν προστασία' [500 tailors ask for protection] *Κυπριακός Τύπος* [Cypriot Press], 1 December 1943, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Anonymous, 'Μικρά νέα' [Small News] *Ανεξάρτητος* [Independent], 10 June 1943, 1.

<sup>48</sup> MAL 572/225/41/28.

was the Office of the Controller of Supplies, with the Controller Mr. Joanides, the office was responsible for the supply system, including requisitioning, receipt, storage, stock control, shipment, identification, and accounting of the supplies. Another authority was the Commissioner of Limassol who was appointed by the British Government and acted as the head administrator of the city. Following that the Municipal Council of Limassol with the Mayor Ploutis Servas, who was elected by popular vote.<sup>49</sup> And finally, the various local professional associations such as the Limassol Textiles Merchants' Association and the Association of Textile Sellers of Limassol that represented the interests of the tailors and textile merchants. Each party had its own stake in the scheme, and the local merchants and tailors tried to petition the Municipal Government and the District Commissioner for greater involvement in the distribution of textiles.

For instance, the Limassol Textiles Merchants' Association, on the 6th September 1942 sent a letter addressed to the Commissioner Limassol and the President of the Municipal Committee, that tried to persuade them in collaborating for the distribution scheme:<sup>50</sup>

The Limassol Textiles Merchants' Association.  
 Limassol the 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1943.  
 The Commissioner Limassol,  
 President of Municipal Committee,  
 Limassol.

Honourable Sir,

The Limassol Textiles Merchants' Association by their point to the Commissioner Limassol dated the 24<sup>th</sup> ult., asked that the distribution of 'aladja' and 'pantalonikia' as well as other textiles, be entrusted on the basis of certain proposal which have been made some time ago by the brother Association of Nicosia to the Controller of Supplies and which is included in different petitions and memorandums of our Association, copied of which have been enclosed in our said petition of 24<sup>th</sup> ult.

The Commissioner of Limassol by his letter of the 31<sup>st</sup> ult. informed us that the distribution scheme has been entrusted to the Limassol Mu-

---

<sup>49</sup> The Cyprus Blue Book, 1946, 21, 115.

<sup>50</sup> MAL 572/225/41/6.

nicipality. For this reason we apply to your Honour as president of the Municipal Committee.

We know that the Municipality with its usual stull cannot do the distribution itself of so great a quantity of textiles to so many people and will have to make agreements with third persons to undertake the distribution of textiles, paying to them the small percentage of commission which has been approved by the Government to cover the distribution expenses.

Our shops are all nearly empty on account of the scaring merchandise which renders our business problematic and for many of us the support of our families difficult.

It is obvious that we dispose in our shops sufficient effort and time, as well as qualified personnel for the successful application of the scheme as far as the distribution part is concerned since we are sustaining the expenses of their maintenance.

Since for various reasons, very few of us have been granted import Licenses during the war and the small quantity of our imported goods are requisitioned by the Government, now that goods of our lines are to be distributed to the public, it is just and reasonable this should be done through the recognized retail textiles merchants, as same was done with grocers.

In the present case especially it is more practical the distribution to be done through approximately 30 shops than through one, in this way the distribution which would have taken 4 or 6 months to be completed, will now take only 4 or 6 days. This will both satisfy the public who will meet its needs in a short time; because every one with his card which will be given to him by the Municipality and in which will be stated the quantity and kind of goods which is entitled to receive (value of which will be probably paid to the Municipality when taking his card) will go to the pre-arranged shop and take delivery of his goods.

The above arrangement will be under the responsibility of our Association in general and of the respective retailers separately, who will act as trustees of the Municipality. A few details that may still remain unsettled as regards the working of this scheme can be arranged between the Committee under your chairmanship and ours.

Trusting that our application will receive your favourable consideration and thanking you in anticipation.

We have the honour to be  
Sir,  
your obedient servants  
(Sgd) Loukaides

Another labour organization the Association of Textile Sellers of Limassol, that represented all the textile sellers of the city, had requested the Controller of Supplies and the Governor of Limassol to be appointed responsible for the distribution of textiles in the city. The Governor responded by saying that this was already under the authority of the Municipality of Limassol. In turn the Association sent a letter on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1943 to the Municipality to request a meeting with the officials to discuss the possible involvement of the Association in the distribution in cooperation with the municipal authorities.<sup>51</sup> The Association followed its petition with another letter on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1943, that was replied to by the President of the Municipal Committee with a letter on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1943. In this letter he informs the Association that the Municipal Committee has decided to decline the offer to distribute the textiles together with the Association and under the conditions they petitioned. Additionally, he stressed that the Municipality would go forward with the distribution as soon as possible on its own terms.<sup>52</sup> In the end, with the letter titled 'Urgent' send on the 5th October 43, Ploutis Servas addresses the Commissioner of Limassol informing him that the Municipality had entered into an agreement with Mr. Agathoclis Loukaides of the Association of Textile Sellers of Limassol for the distribution of clothing in the city.<sup>53</sup>

Urgent.

Limassol, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 43

225/41.

The Commissioner,

Limassol.

subject: Distribution of Clothing.

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the contract dated 14.9.1943, entered into between the Limassol Municipality and Mr. Agathoclis Loukaides

---

<sup>51</sup> MAL 572/225/41/5.

<sup>52</sup> MAL 572/225/41/9A.

<sup>53</sup> MAL 572/225/41/17.

of Limassol, whereby the municipality has undertaken to deliver Mr. Loukaides the quantities of cloths referred to in the said Contract, for distribution to the public by the said Mr. Loukaides under the conditions of the Contract and in accordance with the arrangement is made by the Municipality. A copy of the said Contract is in your hands.

2. The Municipality is distributing at present, though the above Contractor, the following kinds of clothing, viz: (a) aladja Moni; (b) aladja Dimiti; (c) Kapot; and (d) Pantaloniki, on the basis of the allocation prepared at your Office and in accordance with the instructions given to us by the District Inspector,

3. The distribution of the clothing referred to in para 2 above started some days ago and will be completed within the next ten days or so.

4. In order that the Municipality may be enabled to go on with the distribution of all the other clothing referred to in the said Contract and with a view to avoid any delay in the carrying out of the distribution and eventual loss of time and money, I have the honour to request you to kindly supply us, early as possible the other clothing referred to in the said contract.

5. Suggesting that you will deal with this matter as early as possible/  
I have the honour to be your obedient servant,

(sgd)

Mayor

After the Associations, local merchants also wanted to be involved in the process of textile distribution in the city of Limassol, for example Mr. Loukaides, in a letter to George Shizas, the Vice-president of the Municipal Committee, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1943, expressed his interest in emptying his shop that was located on Agiou Antreou street from his own merchandise and rending it to the Municipality for £40 per month and that he would be responsible for the distribution of the textiles to the public.<sup>54</sup>

Through the duration of the distribution scheme there was frequent correspondence between the Mayor and the Commissioner of Limassol:<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> MAL 572/225/41/4.

<sup>55</sup> MAL 572/225/41/22A.

THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, LIMASSOL

15th October, 1943

His Worship the Mayor,

Your Worship,

I have the honour to inform you that certain quantity of knitting wool has been allotted to Limassol town and to enquire whether the Municipality would be prepared to undertake its distribution.

(sgd) St. Evagelides

Commissioner.

Problems arose with the distribution and the fixing of prices that did not correspond to the actual quality of clothes but instead was a fixed price for all qualities, in a letter to the Commissioner dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1943 the Mayor of Limassol wrote:<sup>56</sup>

Limassol 18th October, 43

225/41.

The Commissioner,

Limassol.

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the distribution of clothing to the Public, under the Government Scheme; and to protest, on behalf of the Council of the Municipal Corporation of Limassol, for the revision made at your office of the quantities of clothing allotted to each applicant by the committees appointed.

I am to state also that each revision is in most cases unjust and results in an inevitable friction between the Public and Municipality, which latter is always considered by the Public to be responsible for any unjust action in the present and similar cases.

2. The Municipal Council decided also that the Municipality is not prepared to undertake in future the distribution of any clothing, foodstuff and other commodities, unless the Municipality is entrusted with the preparation of the distribution lists drawn up in accordance with deci-

---

<sup>56</sup> MAL 572/225/41/22ΣΤ.

sions taken by the Council or any Committee appointed by the Council for the purpose.

3. In regard to the distribution of Men's suitings and ladies woolens, the Municipal Council decided that they are not prepared to undertake the distribution of this clothing unless and until different prices are fixed for each kind of such clothing, according to quality, instead of an average price per pic for the whole lot, as fixed by the Controller of Supplier.

4. I shall be pleased if you will kindly let me have an early reply to the above.

I have the honour, to be,  
sir,  
your obedient Servant,  
(sgd)  
Mayor.

The Municipality of Limassol decided to resolve the issue internally after receiving the entire supply of fabrics from the Government and to re-price and readjust the price internally with the help of the members of the Committee of the Limassol Tailors Association and the members of the Limassol Textiles Merchants' Association. In a letter to the Committee of the Limassol Tailors Association the Mayor of Limassol wrote:<sup>57</sup>

Limassol 23 of October, 43  
225/41  
To  
the Committee of the Limassol  
Tailors Association of Limassol  
Limassol.

Sirs,

As you know, the Municipality of Limassol has undertaken to distribute to the public, along with other fabrics, a certain amount of cashmere and woolen women's fabrics. We want to divide these fabrics into qualities in order to set a separate price for each quality, because unfortunately the Office of the Controller of Supplies set a single price for everything.

---

<sup>57</sup> MAL 572/225/41/27. Translated from the Greek original by Barbara Stivarou.



The Municipal Council instructed me to warmly ask you to appoint two representatives from your Association, who together with the representatives of the Textile Association, will voluntarily undertake to distinguish the different qualities of the above fabrics and to classify them in different categories with basis for determining the selling price for the first quality eg 100, e.g.

Quality	'A' – 100	
	'B' – 80	
	'C' – 60	etc.

With the belief that you will want to offer your services for an issue that is in the interest of the Citizens, and that we will have your answer soon.

With honor,  
the  
Mayor

At the same time the fabric was sold in moderation but could not exceed the quantity for sewing a suit or as it is called in the letters of a full costume. As mentioned before, because the measures varied, the British decided at 19½ - 20 pics per piece as an average.<sup>58</sup>

The city of Limassol called for its citizens to be registered in the catalogues for clothing distribution, that was organized by the city's Office of Market Regulation. The Mayor of the city, Ploutis Servas, issued a notice on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November of 1943 to extend the deadline for registration in the catalogues to the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1943 since many citizens of the city were not registered<sup>59</sup> The Office of Market Regulation of the Municipality of Limassol was the authority for issuing ration books for the sale of cashmere (woolen fabrics), socks and other clothing. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1943 it published a notice that it would issue ration books for clothing every workday from 8:00 in the morning to 11:30 and from 02:00 until 04:00 in the afternoon. For Saturday the issuing was done until midday.<sup>60</sup>

The shortage of clothes during the war is evident through various records from the Municipal Archive and from articles in the press. In a letter to the Mayor of Limassol

---

<sup>58</sup> MAL 572/225/41/1.

<sup>59</sup> MAL 572/225/41/35A; Photo 1 'Announcement' Annex.

<sup>60</sup> MAL 572/225/41/49.

dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1943, the Municipal Doctor, complains that during his inspection of various shops and restaurants he noticed that towels and aprons were either completely absent or in a miserable state and petitioned the Mayor to ask from the Government capot to be distributed among 60 barbershops, 95 barbers, 32 restaurants, 45 bakeries, 100 bakers, 25 butchers, 15 animal slaughterers and 40 green-grocers. Each establishment would be allotted more fabric than individual laborers. In total the Doctor asked for 3655 cubits of capot.<sup>61</sup>

The distribution of textiles was publicized through the press, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1943 the Governor of Limassol announced that the distribution of locally made woolen textiles would be distributed to the villages of the Province of Limassol. The rate for the villagers was 6 shillings per cubit. Additionally, he informed the public that more locally made fabrics would be distributed in the future, aladja single 5 piastres per cubit, aladja dimiti 10 piastres per cubit, kapot 6 piastres per cubit and pantaloniki for 17 piastres per cubit.<sup>62</sup> The receivers would be issued a receipt that certified that they received their allotted amount and prevent anyone from getting more than one item on their name.<sup>63</sup>

#### *The formation of a black market for textiles*

A problem that emerged after the implementation of rationing was the creation of a parallel black market, references from the press as well as the announcements of court cases show us a glimpse of the conditions. In an article in the newspaper *Eleftheria* dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1943 we are informed of instances in the countryside where some people were able to get fabric for one or more costumes with the aim of reselling it later and pleading calls for the implementation of some sort of control by the authorities.<sup>64</sup> Press releases from court cases in Nicosia show a case where Michael Aspris from Palaemetochos, an ex-soldier of the Cyprus Regiment, tricked three women, Eleni Kiriakou from Kaimakli, Genovefa Joumali from Enkomi and Christallou Kiriakou, into giving him various clothing articles including shirts, socks, capot and money with the promise of delivering them to their husbands that were fighting on the front, for this he was sentenced to one year in jail. Additionally, Ali

---

<sup>61</sup> MAL 572/225/41/54.

<sup>62</sup> Anonymous, 'Διανομή ειδών ματισμού εν Λεμεσώ' [Distribution of clothing items in Limassol] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 25 December 1943, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Photo 3 'Empty Receipt Annex.

<sup>64</sup> Anonymous, 'Βάσανα Υπαιθρου' [Rural Suffering] *Ελευθερία* [*Eleftheria*], 5 April 1943, 2.

Reza from Peristerona was sentenced to a £10 fine for selling aladja over the tariff.<sup>65</sup> Also in Nicosia, Loizos Theofanous was sentenced to 1 month in jail, a £7 fine and £3 in damages for selling three fabric rolls over the tariff. Furthermore, two men Fatma Mehmet and Enver Houtaverti were sentenced to lighter sentences for selling woven textiles above the tariff.<sup>66</sup> In Limassol Eva Kokkinou was sentenced to a fine of £3.10 and £1 in court fees for being in possession of fabrics without a license and for selling a corset for £4.50 instead of 10 shillings.<sup>67</sup> The police conducted searches in the cities and the villages for stolen goods including food and clothing, in the village of Kolossi a man was arrested for hoarding a number of men's and women's clothing.<sup>68</sup>

### *Cataloguing textile types*

From the correspondence between the Controller of Supplies and the Commissioner we have a detailed list of both fabric categories and quantities corresponding to their values. What is not specified is the origin of the fabrics, i.e. whether they are imported, or products made locally. From the copy of a report prepared by a Committee appointed by the Government to investigate the textiles industry in Cyprus entitled 'Report on the Textiles Industry in Cyprus issued by the Supplies Transport & Marketing Department'. It was finished after the war on May 1947 and circulated internally without being published officially. From it we gather that the cotton industry was the largest industry within the textile trade. According to the report 'We have in the island already 3.300 spindles in the Government Factory. The 10.000 spindles would produce enough yarn for all the island's requirements, including hand loom weaving as carried pre-war.'<sup>69</sup> Similar circumstances are in the areas of spinning ('Producing a good regular yarn in the Government Mill'), weaving and dyeing cotton.<sup>70</sup> In terms of the import and export of wool we learn that 'The 1938 imports of Woolen Piece Goods was 457.000 yards. Approximately 150 tons of washed wool is required for this amount of Cloth. Cyprus is producing one hundred tons of Clipped

<sup>65</sup> Anonymous, 'Δικαστηριακά Λευκωσίας' [Nicosia Court Cases] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ* [New Cypriot Guardian], 12 June 1943, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Anonymous, 'Δικαστηριακά' [Court Cases] *Ανεξάρτητος* [Independent], 11 March 1943, 1.

<sup>67</sup> Anonymous, 'Νέα Λεμεσού' [News Limassol] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ* [New Cypriot Guardian], 13 May 1943, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Anonymous, 'Νέα Λεμεσού' [Limassol News] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ* [New Cypriot Guardian], 5 May 1943, 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Report on the Textiles Industry in Cyprus issued by the Supplies Transport & Marketing Department*, (Unpublished report, 1947), 1.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

wool annually... Up to the present time all the wool clip, except a small amount used by the hand loom weavers'.<sup>71</sup> On hosiery, wool, cotton underwear, socks and stockings we are informed that: 'No figures are available to show the pre-war imports. But some small factories imported machinery during the war to cover the island's needs locally'.<sup>72</sup> For the silk industry we know of a local factory that continued to operate during the war: 'There is a very good Filature Factory near Paphos producing a Grade 1 silk, during the war has been manufactured into service requirements'.<sup>73</sup> From this report we can gather that Cyprus with much austerity and control in the consumption of fabrics could have been almost self-sufficient in order to cover the local demand, without including the need for synthetic fabrics and luxury items.

The Controller of Supplies notified the Commissioner of Limassol on the textiles that were debited to the Municipality of Limassol.<sup>74</sup> The government was mostly interested in supplying the Municipalities with the textiles and charging the appropriate fees, then the Municipalities were tasked to mostly operate themselves in regard to the distribution. From the letter we can see that there is no reference to synthetic fabrics such as asvestos or rayon piece goods that were mostly the product of import or were not used on a large scale in Cyprus, while hemp and linen were not produced in large quantities on the island. Thus, we can assume that the control was focused on the local production only.<sup>75</sup>

THE OFFICE OF THE  
CONTROLLER OF SUPPLIES

Nicosia, 28th of August, 1943

No. 12435

Commissioner,  
Limassol.

Further to my letter No.BJS/190/B/19402 of the 26th August 1943, the following is an account showing the amounts with which the Municipality has been debited:

1080	pics	Haircloth	3 /-	a pic	162.0.0
1962		Linings	3/-		294.6.0

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Photo 2 'Receipt' Annex.

<sup>75</sup> MAL 572/225/41/2.

142		Overcoating	15/-		106.10.0
3624		Men's Suitings	15/-		2718.0.0
23624		Ladies Woolens	8/-		915.0.0
2016		Grey Drill	3/44		352.16.0
1863		Flannelettes	1/5		162.18.0
180 doz.	pairs	Ladies Silk			
		Stockings	2/4 ½	each pair	270.0.0
500		Ladies Cotton			
		Stockings	2/4½		750.0.0
346		Men's socks	1/-		207.12.0
5040	pics	White Drill	2/2	a pic.	560.0.0
11025		Khakki Drill	2/2		1225.0.0
69519		Aladja Single	-/5		1931.15.0
5678		Aladja Dimiti	1/1		315.6.0
21225 ½		Pantaloniki	1/8		2001.12.6
29488		Capot	-/6		982.18.6
					£12988.15.0

This amount includes the 3623 pics asked for in your letter No. 286/42 of the 24th August, 1943.

(Sgd) Joanides

For Controller of Supplies

The clothes referenced in the list are the following, the haircloth was made up of stiff woolen fabric. The linings are placed in specific places on clothing, hats etc. to prevent wearing and tearing and they also add warmth to winter clothes. Overcoating refers to a type of long coats made of wool that are usually worn in the winter. The term Men's Suiting's refers to a suit set made of wool comprising of a jacket or coat and trousers. Ladies Silk (dress) Ladies Cotton (dress) and Ladies Woolens (dress) are dresses consisting of a skirt with an attached bodice that created the appearance of a dress. White, Khakki and Grey Drill, drill is a durable cotton fabric used in clothing items such as shirts, safari jackets, blouses, and some types of sports clothing. The heavier weights were often used in corsets and are commonly used in work clothing and uniforms. Flannelettes were soft woven fabrics. Stockings (cotton) and Stockings (silk) these were usually created through machine knitting and could be made of cotton, linen, wool or silk. Aladja Single and Aladja Dimiti were characteristic Cypriot

fabrics made of cotton with blue and red stripes. Decoration at the openings and edges is very simple, consisting of braided strips or coloured threads.<sup>76</sup> Pantalóniki was a cotton coat and similar fabrics that were dyed before weaving and were suitable for bags and work trousers. Finally, Capot is a woolen fabric that was used to make a capote, a long coat or cloak with a hood.

*Problems arising from the fabric sizes and cashmere qualities*

Initially, woolen fabric was separated into local and imported, with the local being cheaper. An important aspect to determining the price was the thickness of the fabric, that is, the thickness of the yarn during knitting. Because of this it was commonplace in the past to weight the woolen fabric to determine its price. The fact that the British offered a common price for both types created a large number of negative reactions. In an article in the newspaper *Anexartetos* dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1943, the Central Economic Office of AKEL lampoons the Office of the Controller of Supplies, for rationing woolen fabrics at a fixed price of 15 shillings per cubit instead of according to their quality, since previously they were sold at 5 shillings per cubit, others for 6, 7, 10, 15 while others were more expensive at 18 and 20. This was done by the Office in order to lower the price index, which was successful, and the index dropped from 278 to 231. This in turn increased the purchasing power of the Cypriot pound by 4 shillings. The article criticized the fact that poor workers bought woolen fabrics worth 5 shillings for 15, 200% more than their worth, and that the sellers made a profit on the backs of the poorer members of society. Additionally, the article criticizes the lack of control by the Office of the Controller of Supplies towards the merchant-tailors, who were able to uncontrollably increase the prices, for example a costume could be sold for £25, of which the textile itself was just £4 and the added £21 was for the 'labour costs'. This led to costumes being sold in the black market for £15 usually and for £20-25 to the upper classes.<sup>77</sup> The Office responded to the accusations by claiming that the woolen textiles were worth 12 shillings. To refute this the Central Economic Office of AKEL provided testimony and detailed information on prices from traders in Nicosia who sold woolen fabrics at the aforementioned low prices to the government. The price fixing led to cheap fabrics worth 5, 6, 7 shillings to be sold for 15 shillings to lower class citizens, while the upper class through connections was able to

---

<sup>76</sup> Euphrosyne Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, 'Cypriot Costumes as Seen by Women Travellers During the First Decades of British Rule: Impressions and Reality' (2005) 44(1) *Folk Life*, 51.

<sup>77</sup> Central Economic Office of AKEL, 'Η διανομή κασμηριών' [The distribution of woolen textiles] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 16 October 1943, 2.

buy woolen fabric worth much more for just 15 shillings. AKEL called for the creation of a popular and democratic audit board for the distribution of supplies.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

The British Colonial policy can be summarized as to controlling the production and the importation of textiles in Cyprus and the fair distribution of the material to each province. Nevertheless, the colonial government was distant and did not really care about the supply of textiles to the general population. Their main concern was to charge the Municipal governments with the price of textiles they provided them and to then collect the relevant amounts.

From the analysis of the correspondence and the government and municipal announcements available at the Municipal Archive of Limassol we are able to piece together the creation and organization of the supply chain for the rationing of textiles to the Cypriot society by the British Colonial Government and the Municipal Councils of each city. It is evident that the Municipalities did not take a passive role during the distribution, but they were in fact the ones responsible for the registration of their citizens in the catalogues,<sup>79</sup> for the distribution of the textiles themselves,<sup>80</sup> and for the coordination between various tailors' associations that wanted to participate in the scheme.<sup>81</sup>

Although the image painted from the official documents is one of apt coordination and good management, albeit with the usual disagreements between the associations, local and state government.<sup>82</sup> The press of the time paints a completely different picture, that comes mainly from two different sides, the first are the various tailors associations that existed through the island and continuously complained to the local and state government for the lack of involvement of their associations in the distribution schemes,<sup>83</sup> while at the same time expressed publicly their dissatisfaction with the state government, that did not provide them with enough textiles and they were running out of resources that led to increased unemployment to tailors they also wished for a bigger stake in the distribution scheme with a cooperation between

---

<sup>78</sup> Central Economic Office of AKEL, 'Οι τιμές των διανεμηθέντων κασμηριών' [The prices of the distributed of woolen textiles] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 11 November 1943, 2.

<sup>79</sup> MAL 572/225/41/35A.

<sup>80</sup> MAL 572/225/41/28.

<sup>81</sup> MAL 572/225/41/17.

<sup>82</sup> MAL 572/225/41/6.

<sup>83</sup> MAL 572/225/41/17.

the tailors associations, the Municipalities and the Government for the distribution of textiles.<sup>84</sup>

On the other hand, the locals and especially the villagers as well as the workers associations and AKEL, often took to the press to express their dissatisfaction with the injustices of the rationing system and of the ever-reaching hand of the black market. An especially troubling problem was that the government sold at a fixed price of 15 shillings, all types of woolen fabrics, even the lower quality ones that were worth 5, 6 or 7 shillings. This in turn led to the poorer members of society buying for more money low quality fabrics and at the same time the richer members who had connections were able to buy woolen fabrics that were worth 20 or 30 shillings with less money.<sup>85</sup> The black market was especially harsh on the common people since it led to an ever bigger increase of the price index, traffickers would sell products at much higher prices, making them available to the upper class but virtually unattainable to the people.

The British Government set up the Office of Complaints for the Black Market where people could fill in their grievances, this led to arrests, trials and the infliction of prison sentences and fines to the traffickers,<sup>86</sup> without the black market ever disappearing.

The file with number 225/41, titled 'Fabrics' (Υφάσματα) in archive of the Pat-ticheion Municipal Museum, Historical Archives, Research Center of Limassol helps us to understand the special importance fabric held as an essential item during the Second World War, due to this importance it was rationed together with other necessities such as foodstuff and fuel. This is further highlighted by the role it played in the policies enacted by the central and local governments, which is evident by both the internal correspondence that exists in the archive, the official reports such as the Blue Books as well as articles published in the press of the time.

---

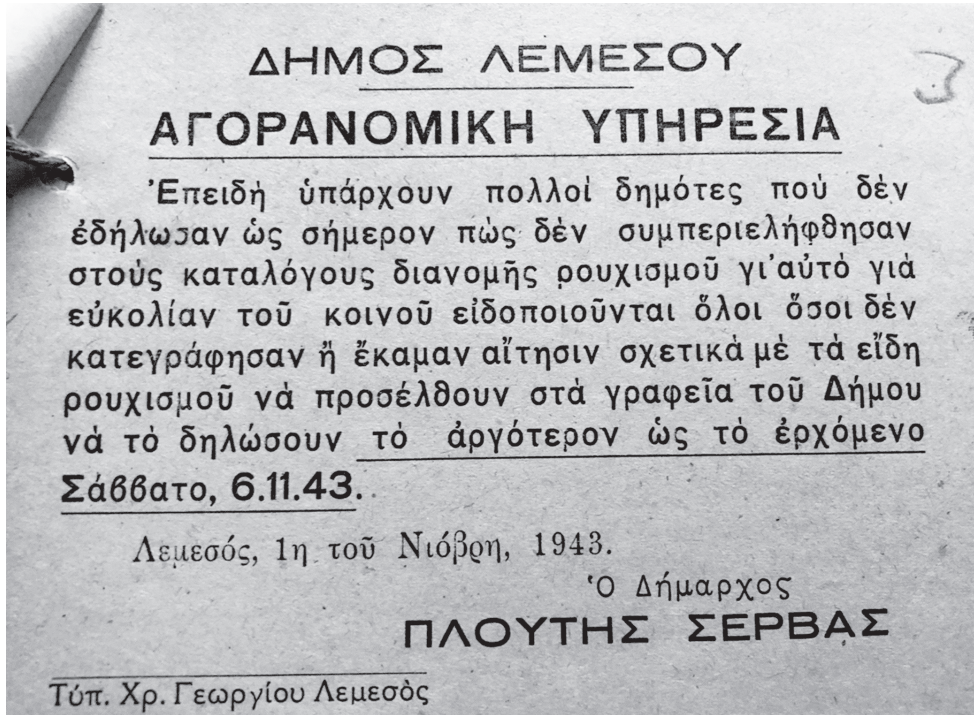
<sup>84</sup> Anonymous, Σύσκεψις ραπτών και ραπτεργατών Κύπρου [Meeting of tailors and textile workers of Cyprus] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 21 April 1943, 2; Anonymous, 'Το ζήτημα της επενδύσεως' [The investment issue] *Εσπερινή* [*Evening*], 10 April 1943, 2.

<sup>85</sup> Central Economic Office of AKEL, 'Οι τιμές των διανεμηθέντων κασμηριών' [The prices of the distributed of woolen textiles] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 11 November 1943, 2.

<sup>86</sup> Ch. G. 'Το γραφείο παραπόνων προς καταπολέμησιν της μαύρης αγοράς' [Office of complaints for the combat of the black market] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 14 January 1943, 2.



Annex



Photograph. 1. Announcement by the Mayor Ploutis Servas on behalf of the Municipality of Limassol. A last call to anyone who has not yet registered on the catalogue of the city in order to receive textiles. The final registration date is the 6<sup>th</sup> of September of 1943. (Patticheion Municipal Museum, Historical Archives, Research Center of Limassol MAL, 572/225/41/35A).

COOPERATIVE CENTRAL BANK LTD.  
LIMASSOL DISTRIBUTION CENTRE

DATE 17/4/43 12 B

STOCK CLERK No 400452

Please deliver to Municipality

No.	PARTICULARS
	<u>8 bags 3623 pins</u>
	<u>particulars</u>
	<u>delivered on 17/4/43</u>

Received the above Goods

[Signature] STOREKEEPER [Signature]

Photograph. 2. Receipt issued by the government that certifies that the Municipality of Limassol received a specified number of textiles (Patticheion Municipal Museum, Historical Archives, Research Center of Limassol MAL, 572/225/41/12B).

ΔΗΜΟΣ ΛΕΜΕΣΟΥ  
ΔΙΑΝΟΜΗ ΥΦΑΣΜΑΤΩΝ  
ΚΑΠΟΤ

№ 1052

Πηχεις: .....

.....

Αριθ. έγγραφης: .....

Ημερομ. ....

.....

ΔΗΜΟΣ ΛΕΜΕΣΟΥ  
ΔΙΑΝΟΜΗ ΥΦΑΣΜΑΤΩΝ  
ΠΑΝΤΑΛΟΝΙΚΙ

№ 1052

Πηχεις: .....

.....

Αριθ. έγγραφης: .....

Ημερομ. ....

.....

Photograph 3. Empty receipt that was going to be issued by the Municipality of Limassol to the people who were registered to receive capot and pantaloniki (Patticheion Municipal Museum, Historical Archives, Research Center of Limassol MAL, 572/225/41, not numbered).

## References

### *Archival Sources/Unpublished Sources*

MAL 572/225/41

Municipal Archive of Limassol (MAL), File 572, Numbering according to the Municipality 225/41, Date of file: 1943 Jan. – Dec. Name of file: Υφάσματα (Fabrics).

MAL 572/225/41/1.

MAL 572/225/41/2.

MAL 572/225/41/4.

MAL 572/225/41/5.

MAL 572/225/41/6.

MAL 572/225/41/9A.

MAL 572/225/41/17.

MAL 572/225/41/22A.

MAL 572/225/41/22ΣΤ.

MAL 572/225/41/27.

MAL 572/225/41/28.

MAL 572/225/41/35A.

MAL 572/225/41/49.

MAL 572/225/41/54.

Report on the Textiles Industry in Cyprus issued by the Supplies Transport & Marketing Department, (Unpublished report, 1947).

### *British Colonial Government Works*

British Colonial Government, *Cyprus. Handbook prepared under the direction of the historical section of the Foreign Office. No. 65* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920).

British Colonial Government, Supplement No. 3 to The Cyprus Gazettee No. 2806 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1940. Subsidiary legislation.

British Colonial Government, Supplement No. 3 to The Cyprus Gazettee No. 3220 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1946. Subsidiary legislation.

British Colonial Government, The Cyprus Blue Book, 1938.

British Colonial Government, The Cyprus Blue Book, 1946.

British Colonial Government, The Cyprus Gazette, 1941.

British Colonial Government, The Cyprus Gazette, 1943.

### *Newspapers*

Anonymous, '500 ράπται ζητούν προστασία' [500 tailors ask for protection] *Κυπριακός Τύπος [Cypriot Press]*, 1 December 1943, 2.

Anonymous, 'Βάσανα Υπαίθρου' [Rural Suffering], *Ελευθερία [Eleftheria]*, 5 April 1943, 2.

Anonymous, 'Διανομή ειδών ματισμού εν Λεμεσώ' [Distribution of clothing items in Limassol], *Ανεξάρτητος [Independent]*, 25 December 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Δικαστηριακά Λευκωσίας' [Nicosia Court Cases] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ [New Cypriot Guardian]*, 12 June 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Δικαστηριακά' [Court Cases] *Ανεξάρτητος [Independent]*, 11 March 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Η διανομή κασμηριών' [The distribution of cashmere], *Ανεξάρτητος [Independent]*, 16 October 1943, 2.

Anonymous, 'Η κυβέρνηση εισηγήθη εις τας εργατ. συντεχνίας αναθεώρουν της αποφάσεως των δια απεργίαν' [The government has suggested to the labor unions to recall their decision on striking] *Ελευθερία [Eleftheria]*, 26 August 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Η μόνη μας αξίωσις' *Εσπερινή [Evening]*, 10 April 1943, 2.

Anonymous, 'Η χθεσινή συνεδρία του Ελλην. Εκπαιδευτ. Συμβουλίου' [Yesterday's meeting of the Greek Education Council] *Ελευθερία [Eleftheria]*, 10 April 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Κάμποτ δια τας εγκύους γυναίκας' [Capot for pregnant women] *Κυπριακός Τύπος [Cypriot Press]*, 18 April 1943, 2.

Anonymous, 'Μικρά νέα' [Small News] *Ανεξάρτητος [Independent]*, 10 June 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Νέα Λεμεσού' [Limassol News] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ [New Cypriot Guardian]*, 5 May 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Νέα Λεμεσού' [News Limassol] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ [New Cypriot Guardian]*, 13 May 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Ποιον το σχέδιον διανομης ειδών ματισμού και υποδήσεως' [What is the distribution plan of clothing and footwear] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ [New Cypriot Guardian]*, 30 May 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Συνέντευξις του Δημάρχου Λεμεσού μετά του Αποικιακού Γραμματέως' [Interview of the Mayor of Limassol with the Colonial Secretary], *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 30 December 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Το ζήτημα της επενδύσεως' [The investment issue] *Εσπερινή* [*Evening*], 10 April 1943, 2.

Anonymous, 'Ανεξέλεγκτος η εις τας πόλεις και χωριά διανομή διαφόρων χρειώδων του βίου' [The distribution of various necessities of life in the cities and villages is uncontrollable] *Φωνή της Κύπρου* [*Voice of Cyprus*], 15 May 1943, 2.

Anonymous, 'Κάποτ δι' εγγύους μητέρας' [Capot for pregnant women], *Πάφος* [*Paphos*], 22 April 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Κάποτ δια τας εγκύους γυναίκας' [Capot for pregnant women], *Χρόνος* [*Time*], 24 April 1943, 2.

Anonymous, 'Νέα Λεμεσού' [Limassol News] *Νέος Κυπριακός Φύλαξ* [*New Cypriot Guardian*], 20 April 1943, 1.

Anonymous, 'Σύσκεψις ραπτών και ραπτεργατών Κύπρου' [Meeting of tailors and textile workers of Cyprus] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 21 April 1943, 2.

Central Economic Office of AKEL, 'Η διανομή κασμηριών' [The distribution of woolen textiles] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 16 October 1943, 2.

Central Economic Office of AKEL, 'Οι τιμές των διανεμηθέντων κασμηριών' [The prices of the distributed of woolen textiles] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 11 November 1943, 2.

Ch. G. 'Το γραφείο παραπόνων προς καταπολέμησιν της μαύρης αγοράς' [Office of complaints for the combat of the black market] *Ανεξάρτητος* [*Independent*], 14 January 1943, 2.

### ***Secondary Sources***

Alecou A., *Communism and Nationalism in Postwar Cyprus, 1945-1955 Politics and Ideologies Under British Rule* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Alexis Rappas, 'The Labor Question in Colonial Cyprus, 1936-1941: Political Stakes in a Battle of Denominations' (2009) 76 *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 194-216.

Dimitrakis, P., 'The Special Operations Executive and Cyprus in the Second World War' (2009) 45(2) 315-328.

- Dodd C., *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- Eliot S. & Wiggam M., (eds) *Allied Communication to the Public During the Second World War: National and Transnational Networks* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) 191.
- Fitzpatrick O., 'Coupons, Clothing and Class: The Rationing of Dress in Ireland, 1942–1948' (2014) 48(2) *Costume*, 236.
- Futselaar R., *Lard, lice and longevity: the standard of living in occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940-1945* (Vol. 1). (Amsterdam University Press 2008) 96.
- Kazamias G., *Military Recruitment and Selection in a British Colony: The Cyprus Regiment 1939-1944* in Elizabeth A. Close, George Couvalis, Michalēs Tsianikas (eds), *Greek Research in Australia: Proceedings of the Sixth Biennial International Conference of Greek Studies, Flinders University June 2005* (Flinders University Department of Languages - Modern Greek: Adelaide, 2007) 333-342.
- McNeil P., 'Put Your Best Face Forward': The Impact of the Second World War on British Dress' (1993) 6(4) *Journal of Design History*, 284.
- Papastratis P., *British Policy Towards Greece During the Second World War 1941-1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, E. 'Cypriot Costumes as Seen by Women Travellers During the First Decades of British Rule: Impressions and Reality' (2005) 44(1) *Folk Life*, 48-62.
- Savvas C. & Panayiotou P., *Queens of Amathus* (LGK in the Community, 2019) 33.
- Williams F. M., 'Price control and rationing in foreign countries during the War' (1945) 61 *Monthly Labor Review* 882.