

# **Propaganda and the Cyprus Revolt: Rebellion, Counter-Insurgency and the Media, 1995-1959**

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**London: I.B. Tauris, 2020**

**pp. XIII + 243**

**ISBN: 978-1-7883-1731-3**

This monograph by Maria Hadjiathanasiou provides an original critical analysis of propaganda during the Cyprus revolt (1955-1959), as used both by the British and the Greek side. The author clarifies that she chose propaganda as her focus exactly because it had a radical effect on the development of events in Cyprus. The overarching argument of the study is that propaganda was an indispensable weapon of the insurgents and a vital aspect of the counter-insurgency campaign during Cyprus' decolonisation, which shaped to a large extent the development of events in Cyprus during the years of the revolt until, and after, the island's independence in 1960.

Hadjiathanasiou's starting point is that the significance of propaganda in the Cyprus revolt has been underestimated in the existing historiography, as research is rather focused on the political dimensions of the decolonisation in Cyprus. This book is therefore the first attempt to investigate and bring the propaganda issue to the foreground, with the aim to learn and comprehend what role it played during the island's decolonisation.

The book is based on primary material, previously inaccessible, untranslated, or unpublished, and retrieved from a variety of archives, mainly the recently declassified 'Migrated Archives' of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It is also based on recent historical debates about propaganda during the British Empire's 'small-wars' of decolonisation. The quantity of the research material and the quality of the author's analysis significantly expand the limited academic research done on this topic.

Beyond the Introduction (Chapter 1) and the Conclusion (Chapter 6), the book is split into four main parts. Chapter 2 is a prelude to the study of the propaganda war raging between 1955 and 1959. It explores the start of the policy of Govern-

ment propaganda in an attempt to understand just how urgent and important this was, why it was important, and how it was meant to contribute to the British counter-insurgency campaign in Cyprus.

Through archival material that dates to before the start of EOKA's campaign in April 1955, the author reveals that, since the early 1950s, the Cyprus colonial government was in desperate need of propaganda to influence the Greek Cypriots. However, no matter how doubtful the British propaganda venture for Cyprus may have been, the colonial government needed to reshape Cypriot consciousness by turning people's identities from Greek to Cypriot, as the discussion on 'Cypriotism' has shown. Moreover, in this chapter Hadjiathanasiou examines and supports the argument that there was a severe lack of British experts on propaganda, while those who did exist could not simply parachute into diverse colonial fields of conflict (for example from Malaya to Cyprus) to help colonial government take back control.

Chapter 3 investigates Field Marshal Harding's propaganda plans for Cyprus upon becoming the island's governor. His close collaborators are identified, and their role in the propaganda process is reconstructed and analysed, along with an examination on the importance of 'public opinion' and a 'crisis of trust' on the domestic (Greek Cypriot) front. As Hadjiathanasiou presents, Harding's use of coercive measures to contain the revolt and to re-impose law and order on top of his undiplomatic handling of the situation brought about a total 'splitting of sympathy' between the British colonial government and the Greek Cypriot population. His strong-arm tactics and mishandling of propaganda were also parameters that resulted in the alienation of a large section of international public opinion. On the other hand, Archbishop Makarios' and Colonel Grivas' propaganda had an emotional appeal to the Greek Cypriot audience owing to the strong messages; liberation from foreign rule and political union with motherland Greece. These messages also resonated with international developments.

As the author notes, it was during that time when British propaganda supported the 'divide and rule' policy. The incitement of Turkish Cypriot public opinion and feeling, and, by extension, the stirring up, prompting, and urging of the Turkish government to step up its propaganda campaign on the legitimacy of the Turkish case over Cyprus's future, was a significant aspect of the British propaganda effort. As an answer to the colonial government's miscalculated propaganda policies and coercive measures, EOKA embarked on its own 'propaganda of the deed' to attract

international attention, sympathy, and support. By this time, the propaganda war for Cyprus was on full blast.

Chapter 4 is a diversion from the chronological route of the analysis. It focuses on three case studies on different media used for propaganda purposes: sound (radio, voice aircraft), print (newspapers, publications, leaflets) and vision (television, cinema).

'Sound' explores the history of radio broadcasting and radio jamming in Cyprus during the 1950s, and how Athens Radio and the Cyprus Broadcasting Service (CBS) competed for the Greek Cypriots' attention and loyalty. The second case study, 'Print', consist of two sections: the first one looks at newspapers and publications, and the second one at leaflets. The study explores how print media were given primary importance by the opposing sides during their campaigns, with the aim of winning over local and international public opinion. During this analysis, the inefficiency of the British propaganda and the inability of the colonial government to come up with innovative methods to reply to Greek Cypriot and Greek propaganda becomes evident. Therefore, British propaganda resorted to the unimaginative and arguably desperate technique of imitating the leaflets of EOKA. The third case study reconstructs the history of television in Cyprus. The establishment of a television station in Cyprus by the colonial government intended to take the lead in British efforts in propaganda. However, when it was finally inaugurated in the island, in late 1957, it was arguably too late for it to influence the Cypriots to believe in the benefits of the British rule. Finally, in this Chapter it is argued that borrowed propaganda techniques (from Southeast Asia, Ireland, and Palestine) had limited effect in the Cypriot setting, where Cypriots had little in common with the populations of other territories under British rule. This is a conclusion drawn early on the discussions on propaganda media in Cyprus and recurs throughout the book.

Chapter 5 investigates the use of propaganda in Cyprus during the last period of British rule, under Governor Hugh Foot. EOKA's propaganda policies of passive resistance and boycotting are also investigated, demonstrating the Greek Cypriots' collective struggle against the British colonial ruler and Foot's difficulty in designing effective propaganda measures. This chapter strengthens the argument being made throughout, which is that personal attitudes, such as Harding's and Foot's, inevitably affected policymaking and, consequently, the development of events.

More importantly, however, attention is drawn to the fact that even though Foot knew that by that time propaganda had not persuaded the Cypriots into renounc-

ing EOKA, he was nevertheless eager to get Leslie Glass's advice on the next steps British propaganda should take. However, the intention of the colonial government to redesign psychological warfare for Cyprus had been cut short by the end of the emergency and the political agreement on the future of Cyprus.

All in all, the book establishes propaganda as a vital aspect of the history of the Cyprus revolt and underlines the decisive role it played in the development and outcome of the revolt. It also reconstructs the history of propaganda in Cyprus at the end of the British empire by analysing the propaganda deployed by both the British and the Greek sides. In addition, the study intervenes in wider debates about propaganda at the end of empire and suggests new and well-documented arguments. Finally, the book is worth reading because, as it is based on a bulk of newly released primary material, it shifts the focus of the current historiography away from an overwhelming emphasis on the use of 'wholesale coercion', and clearly proves that propaganda was, along with coercion, a joint driver in the conflict for Cyprus.

**Haralambos Alexandrou**