

ETUDES HELLENIQUES

HELLENIC STUDIES

**La République de Chypre: 50
ans après**

**The Republic of Cyprus: 50
Years After**

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The Relationship of the Soviet Union with the Republic of Cyprus 1960-1964

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine les premiers stades de la relation entre la République de Chypre et l'Union soviétique ainsi que le révèlent un certain nombre de documents du ministère des Affaires étrangères de Chypre entre 1960-1964 et bien d'autres sources. L'accent est mis sur les principales préoccupations de l'Union soviétique telles qu'elles s'expriment dans les documents officiels: la souveraineté compromise de Chypre, son rôle central dans la guerre froide et les activités de l'OTAN en Méditerranée orientale.

ABSTRACT

This article will examine the early stages of the relationship between The Republic of Cyprus and the Soviet Union as it is revealed in a number of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Documents (Cyprus) 1960-1964 and other sources. Focus will be on the main concerns of the Soviet Union as they were expressed in official documents, regarding what was seen as Cyprus' compromised sovereignty, its central role in the Cold War and NATO's activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Introduction: The 'Orthodox Brotherhood'

On October 3, 1963 an article in the Soviet daily newspaper *Izvestia* (FAI/254: 126¹) insisted that NATO was 'nursing designs of turning Cyprus into a nuclear missile pad', an 'unsinkable NATO aircraft carrier' which would effectively seal the fate of the Cypriot people, denying them their sovereign rights and any chance of true independence. The occasion for the article was the third anniversary of Cyprus Independence Day on October 1st and the reference to Cyprus as a potential nuclear facility was part of the overarching theme: advocating the denuclearisation of the whole Mediterranean. This article was subsequently translated into English and sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs²

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in Cyprus as a matter of course. Just a year earlier, the Soviets and the Americans had engaged in one of the most terrifying stand-offs of the whole Cold War over the existence of missiles in another island—this one in the Caribbean—Cuba. And less than a year after the aforementioned *Isvestia* article was published, Soviet nuclear submarines would be in the Eastern Mediterranean, not far from Cyprus, set on an apparent collision course with Turkey's navy and the United States Sixth Fleet.

Forty-seven years later, in a scene apparently resembling the 1964 Cold War scenario, it has been reported that Russia “will send two nuclear-powered submarines to protect [Cyprus's] right to exploration in its maritime zone”³. This is in response to Turkish threats against The Republic of Cyprus's long-term aim to explore its EEZ for oil and gas. The American-based company, Noble Energy, has commenced drilling in September 2011⁴ and, based on the international laws governing the sea, this move has been supported by the EU, United States, Russia and Israel⁵. Turkey, meanwhile, is planning naval and air force exercises in the area scheduled to commence September 15. Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Alexander Lukashevich, has reiterated his government's support of Cyprus's legal rights⁶ but whether this has actually manifested in the form of nuclear submarines remains unconfirmed. Nevertheless, just the *mere possibility* of the Russian presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, patrolling the waters near Cyprus, has often been enough to give pause to the other power-brokers in the region. During the Cold War, it was NATO and the United States and now, half a century later, in a world where the power paradigm seems to be shifting dramatically, the Russian ‘warning’ or ‘threat’ seems to be aimed at a Turkey which is dramatically expanding its own power base in the region⁷. The current Mediterranean crisis can therefore be seen as one of the latest examples of the intricate and sometimes whimsical nature of the often unseen relationship between Russia and Cyprus.

Throughout the second half of the 20th century and in the first decade of the 21st it is a relationship often revealed in epiphanic moments which act as a reminder that, though not as noticeable as Cyprus's relationship with the West, nevertheless the Russian connection has been just as important. On June 29, 2010, for example, the eleventh member of a Russian spy ring was caught and arrested in Cyprus from where he later made his escape, possibly, it was thought, through ‘the Turkish-run enclave in northern Cyprus which is not recognised by the U.S. or most other countries’ (Smith and McGreal, *Guardian*, July 1, 2010) and therefore has no extradition treaties. While reports about this incident tended to blame the Greek Cypriot authorities and especially the court which

granted the alleged spy bail, two interesting comments posted on the internet at the time explained the cause in the following way: “Once again the Greeks have shown their loyalty lies with the Russians” and “If you want to blame anybody, blame the Greeks’ “Orthodox brotherhood” with the Russians”⁸. *The Moscow Times* merely said “There is a heavy Russian presence in Greek Cyprus”⁹ while *New Delhi Television* was more specific about the matter, claiming that Russia’s considerable economic and political influence in Cyprus are best exemplified in the power of Lukoil, ‘the Russian energy giant’ and by the fact that the current President of the Republic, Dimitris Christofias, is ‘a communist who studied in Moscow’¹⁰. The inference quite clearly is that there is a long-standing Greco-Russian affiliation which encompasses cultural and religious commonalities¹¹ as well as economic¹² and political realities.

On April 21, 2004 just three days ahead of the referendum on the Annan Plan in Cyprus the Russian Federation vetoed a US and British-sponsored UN Security Council resolution on Cyprus which would have led to the implementation of a more extensive UN security force in Cyprus should the result of the referenda lead to the reunification of the island. Secretary-General Kofi Annan claimed that the aim of the resolution was to reassure the Cypriots (particularly the Greeks) of the UN commitment to their security should they agree to the implementation of the Plan. The Russian Ambassador at the time justified his country’s veto by arguing that the resolution was essentially an 11th hour “attempt to influence the outcome of the referenda” (Lederer, 2004) which had moreover been put together far too hastily¹³. He insisted that the Cypriots make their decision without any kind of outside interference or pressure. There is no evidence that the Russian ‘intervention’ at this time had any real effect on the actual outcome of the referendum other than in attracting world-wide attention to the issue and perhaps offering, even obliquely, to the Greek Cypriots¹⁴, in particular, support for what was to be their very unpopular action in voting against the Plan¹⁵.

Seven years earlier in 1997, in another controversial act, the Russian firm Rosvoorouzhenie had negotiated with The Republic of Cyprus for the purchase and installation of S-300 defense missiles (Ayman, 2002). It was thought that, apart from the obvious ‘provocation’ to Turkey, the purchase was one way for the Greek Cypriots to gain Russian support at the UN Security Council level with regards to any discussion of the Cyprus ‘problem’ (Ayman, 2002, p. 11) and also to draw international attention once more to the ongoing security issues which beset the troubled island which was host to some 40,000 Turkish troops. From the point of view of the comparatively newly-emergent Russian Federation, it was a lucrative

financial deal on the one hand but it was also undoubtedly an opportunity to 'flex its muscles' and remind the international community—the US and NATO in particular—that Russian power and influence in the Mediterranean and the Middle East was far from over¹⁶. The fact that Russian personnel would be in Cyprus installing these missiles to be used potentially against a NATO member (i.e. Turkey) and in the by-then traditional NATO backyard (i.e. the Eastern Mediterranean) was deemed to be a significant threat to U.S. concerns in the region.

Consequently, another key facet of this stratagem was Russia's ability to make its presence felt in the Greece-Turkey conundrum (Cohen, 1997, p. 5) which often saw these two NATO allies at loggerheads, while both were being militarily supplied by their mutual ally, the United States (Mallinson, 2005, p. 5). The fact that both countries periodically felt inherently dissatisfied with their 'client status' (Uslu, 2003, pp. 75-77, 86-87, 91-92) was still another opportunity for Russian exploitation or manoeuvring. In the wider context of its long relationship with the Republic of Cyprus this was yet another example of the Russian propensity since the 1950s, to insinuate itself into the multi-threaded tapestry that is the Cyprus question either explicitly or implicitly, but never without its own agenda firmly in place.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of Cyprus, State Archives

The aim of this article is to focus on the eventful early years of the Republic of Cyprus and the Soviet response to Cypriot independence in 1960, the civil conflict of 1963-1964 and the threats of Turkish invasion made in June and August, 1964. Apart from secondary sources, I have used sources derived from official government documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which are kept in the Cyprus State Archives in Nicosia. They contain a fascinating mixture of official diplomatic correspondence particularly from Embassies, private letters, translations of articles (especially from the Soviet press), reports, chronologies and telegrams. To the best of my knowledge these documents have been underutilised for the purposes outlined above and an ancillary aim of this research is to open up this area of primary source material for further research.

It should also be mentioned that other documents relating to this period in the records of the Foreign Offices/Ministries of Cyprus, Greece, the United Kingdom and United States have not been declassified and remain beyond the reach of the researcher. William Mallinson, for example, described in detail how

his attempts to access sensitive material from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) were denied him on the grounds that the release of such information 'would be likely to harm our relations with both Cyprus and the United States.' (Mallinson, 2007, p. 506) Greece's files, meanwhile on the whole Cyprus issue appear to be permanently sealed and the United States records, while highly accessible, have nevertheless been carefully edited. The actual Soviet Foreign Affairs records—a portion of which have been declassified—have yet to be consulted¹⁷. Clearly the limitations on the Cyprus researcher are numerous and hence any conclusions derived from source material must always be (by virtue of the gaps in knowledge) regarded as cautious and often contentious.

While it is true that most scholarly works on Cyprus and the Cyprus question make reference to Soviet concerns in the wider context of the Cold War, there has, it seems to me, been far more work done on the British and United States position and role in Cyprus while the Soviet 'contribution' has been clouded—understandably—by much more conjecture and far less solid research¹⁸. I would argue, as indicated above, that there has been a strong, pervasive and deep socio-economic, political and cultural impact on Cyprus by the Soviet Union/Russia which continues to this day and which needs to be fully articulated, assessed and explained. Moreover, while the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents offer, in the first instance, a predictable and standard picture of the establishment and then maintenance of positive diplomatic relations between Cyprus and the Soviet Union, they nevertheless also offer an added insight into the underlying tensions, pressures and ambiguities of the relationship between an essentially Western-sponsored state whose three primary Guarantor powers (Greece, Turkey and Britain) were all members of NATO and its monolithic Communist neighbour which regarded NATO as an ongoing threat to its own security.

Indeed the relationship between the Republic of Cyprus and the Soviet Union during the Cold War was a long and varied one, punctuated by periods of warm friendship (especially during the Makarios and Khrushchev era) and also by periods of what I would term 'concerned neutrality'—at least on the part of the Russians—especially in the immediate post-1974 period. The nature of the 'friendship' was never uniform. One common factor however was that due to the inherent inequity of the relationship in terms of power politics it was very often the various Cypriot Governments which more actively pursued this friendship, trying to create a lasting alliance with the Soviet Union as a counter-balance to the influence and indeed pressure of United States/NATO policy in the region. Is this then a story of unrequited love? Hardly. The Soviet Union clearly was concerned about Cyprus and its colonial status in the 1950s as the Cold War

began to heat up. This concern or interest continued to evolve throughout subsequent decades. Given the significance of the geo-strategic location of Cyprus in relation to its proximity to the Middle East¹⁹ and indeed to the Soviet Union itself, it was obvious that Cyprus would play a not insignificant part in the Cold War. As such, the Soviet Union could not and indeed did not ignore or remain indifferent to developments in Cyprus and most especially once the official independence of the country had been declared in August 1960.

Makarios, Communism and NATO

In fact the Soviet Union was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the newly-independent Cyprus (FA1/256: 79-85, January 30, 1964), the Soviet ambassador arriving in Cyprus on December 26, 1960 (FA1/989). Upon arrival he expressed the Soviet Union's appreciation for the Cypriot struggle against 'colonial domination', its commitment to 'the principles of self-determination' and furthermore intimated the support of 'the many million strong Soviet people to the people of Cyprus' (FA1/989, December 26, 1960). It was standard Soviet communist rhetoric which was to see the Soviet Union take on the mantle of the protector and supporter of the post-war era's many emergent, independent, de-colonised states, especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Zubok & Pleshakov, 1996, pp. 204-208). What made such statements worrisome to NATO, the U.S. and the U.K. in particular was the perceived unpredictability of the policies of President Makarios expressed firstly in his affiliation with the non-Aligned movement whose membership included other 'loose cannons' such as Nasser, Castro and Tito and secondly (and more importantly) with his apparent growing dependence on the Soviet Union²⁰.

Throughout the 1960s the Soviet Union established a number of official cultural and economic ties with Cyprus²¹, with the obvious aim of bringing both nations closer together on a number of levels. This included the education programme which encouraged Cypriot students to study in Soviet tertiary institutions. Reference is made to this in a 1963 Report from the Cypriot Embassy in Moscow which discusses the forty-six students currently studying in the Soviet Union, many of whom seem to be fanatical Communist sympathisers (FA1/254: 46, January 23, 1963)²². This report highlights the fact that the Cypriot students, in contrast to other international students in the Soviet Union (UK and French students are specifically referred to) do not become disenchanted with Communist ideology as a result of their stay there. Considering that the Cypriot Communist Party (AKEL) was one of the strongest in Europe, regularly garnering at least 30% of the Cypriot vote,²³ this is no idle comment. It also points

to an essential, underlying tension between an ostensibly Western-style country needing support outside the Western sphere since the latter seemed to be non-sympathetic to (in particular) Greek-Cypriot concerns about state sovereignty and the right of self-determination. In contrast, the Soviet Union constantly referred to the importance of allowing the Cypriot people to be 'completely independent' (FA1/256: 7, October 19, 1964; FA1/256: 84, May 10, 1966).

It seems clear from reports such as these that, at least on the official level, the Republic of Cyprus had no real love for Communism as a political ideology nor was it completely comfortable with AKEL's influence on the island. As reported in a 1962 telegram sent by the U.S. Embassy in Cyprus to the Department of State, (Wilkins, October 13, 1962) Makarios had vehemently expressed his own anti-Communist views²⁴ and explained his apparently non-aggressive tactics towards Cypriot communism thus: 'I cannot risk dissension within Greek Cypriot community, but I will crush Communists if they try to take over our democratic republic.'²⁵ This did not tally, however, with U.S. and British interpretations of the situation nor with their assessments of Makarios himself whom they regarded as essentially untrust-worthy²⁶. Despite statements of this kind, the reality was that Makarios had secured the electoral support of AKEL prior to the inception of the Republic and a commentator in the *Washington Post* (August 2, 1960) was moved to say that: 'The Cyprus Republic, due for independence August 16, will be the world's first state governed by churchmen and communists operating as partners.' Whether or not this was entirely true was irrelevant. A few months later, in January, 1961, Makarios informed the United States that he would not hesitate to call on the Soviet Union for support if sufficient economic aid was not forthcoming (Nicolet, 2001, p. 165).

It was a fine balancing act that President Makarios seemed ideally suited for, but which ultimately proved to be the major de-stabilising factor of his tenure in office. His personal desire for a truly independent, non-aligned Cyprus (FA1/254, October 10, 1963) seemed to coincide with the Soviet desire for an independent, de-militarised and NATO-free Cyprus (FA1/254: 126, October 3, 1963; FA1/254: 7, October 19, 1964; FA1/256: 80, May 16, 1966). However, either through political naïveté or a wilful denial of Cold War realities, he continued, especially while Khrushchev was in power, to follow this dangerous course of 'serving', as it were, two masters, in order, he hoped, to finally be free of all masters. Khrushchev, it should be noted, adopted, on the one hand, a rather fierce, often confrontational approach in his foreign policy, especially in his dealings with the West, but he also cultivated a peace-loving, 'soft' approach to secure friendship amongst the smaller nations (Zubok & Pleshakov, 1996, p.p. 185, 201-202, 247-

261; Donaldson & Noguee, 2005, pp. 88-90), posing as both their defender and liberator. It is therefore perfectly understandable that any pro-Soviet overtures made by Makarios as head of a newly-independent former British colony, whose sovereignty seemed to be severely compromised by the Western 'Big Brothers'-which still effectively dominated it-were entirely welcome to Khrushchev and were never ignored by his successors.

In the meantime, there were a number of anti-Soviet incidents in Cyprus throughout the 1960s that indicated quite clearly that the vocal anti-Communist contingent on the island was militant and of considerable concern for the Cypriot authorities, especially as they sought to maintain excellent relations with the Soviets. On July 8, 1962, for example, two British R.A.F. men took down two Soviet flags on display at the International Fair in Nicosia. An apology from the British High Commission followed (FA1/254: 26, July 9, 1962) and an irate Soviet letter addressed to the Cypriot Government clearly expressed the hope that 'similar incidents in the future' be prevented (FA1/254: 27, July 18, 1962). In 1967, however, the Soviet Embassy was again irritated by the Cypriot Government's response to the arrest of two possible Soviet spies who were allegedly spying 'against NATO' (FA1/992: 12, March 31, 1967)²⁷. Incidents such as these reinforced the unenviable position of Cyprus during the Cold War and highlighted Cypriot vulnerability in the face of the irreconcilable ideological differences which underpinned that war.

Britain's Nuclear Weapons

According to O'Malley and Craig the independence of Cyprus had, in any case, always been a 'sham' whose real purpose was to maintain Britain's strategic hold, to 'keep the island as an unsinkable aircraft-carrier and intelligence base in the global battle against the Soviets' (1999, p. 79), even if it meant the use of nuclear weapons in defending the West against another possible world war. British policy towards Cyprus mandated that the island should never come under the control of a government considered 'favourably disposed towards the USSR.' (1999, p. 81). In fact, the very idea of a possible Soviet base on the island was nothing short of anathema to the British and its objectives in the Middle East as well as to NATO and its objectives during the Cold War. As early as 1960²⁸, Britain, in the context of its role in NATO (Rogers, 2006, p. 6), had begun its deployment of 'tactical nuclear weapons' on the British base of Akrotiri in Cyprus and later in November 1961 'a permanent storage facility' was set up close by at Cape Gata (Moore, 2001, pp. 60, 63). On the eve of Cypriot independence and while the operation was supposed to be top secret, reports about this nuclear stockpiling

appeared in the British, Greek and Cypriot press (O'Malley and Craig, 1999, p. 86)²⁹ but I have yet to find any official statements on the matter in the Republic of Cyprus Foreign Ministry archive for this period³⁰. The silence is, of course, deafening.

Meanwhile the official Soviet response to NATO's alleged nuclear programme in the Mediterranean, especially from 1963 onwards, was vociferous and to the point. A letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Cyprus (FA1/254, May 21, 1963) warned of NATO's plans to deploy nuclear powered and armed submarines in the Mediterranean and base them in the British military bases in Cyprus and the ports of Malta and Spain. The letter strongly argues that the Cypriot government support the Soviet initiative to declare the Mediterranean a nuclear-free zone. A subsequent article from *Izvestia* (FA1/254: 125-126, October 3, 1963) insisted that Cyprus was being drawn into the NATO orbit, and the first reference (at least in the Foreign Ministry Archive) to Cyprus as a NATO nuclear missile pad was made³¹. By the end of 1963 First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev had delivered a lengthy letter to the United Nations (FA1/255: 1-16, December 31, 1963) which focussed on the dangers of atomic war, the need for general nuclear disarmament and the need to end all forms of colonialism and imperialism (and the military bases set up in their name). In particular, he insisted that territorial disputes needed to be solved without the use of force. Considering that fierce inter-communal fighting had broken out in Nicosia just a few days before, Khrushchev's letter is a timely document and could in fact be a description of the situation in Cyprus although he never explicitly named the island.

Khrushchev and the Crisis in 1963-1964

The fighting broke out on December 21 as a reaction to the Turkish Government's rejection of Makarios's proposed Thirteen Amendments to the Cypriot Constitution³² which would have radically altered the power-dynamic in the Republic's Constitution, significantly reducing the powers of the Turkish Cypriots while simultaneously removing the main causes for the deadlocks which had paralysed the government. This subsequently led to Turkish threats of military intervention which immediately drew the other Guarantor Powers and the United States into the fray. In the months which followed and as Cyprus descended into an incipient civil war, the Soviets began to play a prominent role in defusing and/or further inflaming the already tense situation which saw Turkey threatening to invade in February, March, June and August, 1964.

Khrushchev proved unwavering in his support for the Greek Cypriot position

and demanded that the principles of full state sovereignty and freedom from foreign intervention be permitted, once and for all, on Cyprus. His communications with Makarios often via the Soviet ambassador in Nicosia as well as his letters to U.S. President Johnson, Turkish Prime Minister Inonu, and the UN Security Council clearly conveyed the uncompromising nature of the Soviet position (Joseph, 1985, pp. 129-130). In addition, not only did the Soviets send arms to the Greek Cypriots³³, but their submarines and destroyers hovered around Cyprus much as the US Sixth Fleet (O'Malley and Craig, 1999, p. 103) did for the better part of the summer of 1964³⁴. The implied threat from the Soviets to the Turks and their American allies was very clear. The last thing the Soviets wanted was a partitioned island which could then more easily serve the needs of NATO (Norton in Salem, 1992, p. 103)³⁵. The last thing that the United States wanted was a unified island effectively controlled by the Greek Cypriots who might elect a communist-influenced³⁶ or pro-Soviet government: in other words, another Cuba. Moreover, neither side of the Cold War wanted a localised war which could potentially become another world war or a nuclear war.

The impending Turkish invasion in June was forestalled by the U.S. President threatening to withdraw U.S. support should the Soviet Union attack Turkey in response to the latter's invasion of Cyprus (James 2002, pp. 140-141). This was reinforced by the deployment of a U.S. naval contingent close to Cyprus (O'Malley & Craig 1999, p. 109). Moreover, the very real threat of Soviet involvement/intervention was not a fantasy and that consideration was probably the crucial factor which halted the Turkish operation, at least temporarily.

In August of that year when Turkey again threatened to invade, Makarios turned directly to the Soviet Union and Egypt for military support (Brands, 1987, p. 357). Khrushchev wrote to the Turkish Prime Minister, Inonu, urging him not to make a mistake which could 'expand the conflict, increase the danger of war' (FA1/255: 21, August 9, 1964)³⁷. At the same time, the Cypriot Foreign Minister informed the U.S. Ambassador that the Cypriot Government had formally asked the Soviets to intervene on their behalf (Nicolet 2001, p. 268). Later that day, the UN call for a ceasefire was complied with by both sides (O'Malley & Craig, 1999, p. 117). On August 15, the Soviet Union declared that it would 'help the Republic of Cyprus defend its freedom and independence from foreign invasion' (Nicolet 2001, p. 272). While the terms used were decidedly vague and subject to interpretation, nevertheless the Soviet announcement gave the Greek Cypriot and American administrations the strong impression that the Soviet Union would be prepared to support Cyprus militarily³⁸. Since the Turkish invasion did not actually occur until ten years later, when the political situation had changed

substantially³⁹, the Soviet pledge of 1964 was never put to the test⁴⁰.

As a consequence of the August crisis, the US and UN intensified their attempts to formulate a number of different plans to 'solve' the Cyprus problem while the divisions on the island became further entrenched and the beginnings of defacto partition concretised. Khrushchev continued to apply pressure at the UN. In a letter to the UN in mid-September, 1964, he stated again that: "the Soviet government hereby states that if there is an armed foreign invasion of Cypriot territory, the Soviet Union will help the Republic of Cyprus to defend its freedom and independence against foreign intervention" (Joseph, 1985, pp. 136-137). By the end of the month, the Soviet Union promised to supply the Cypriots with arms and equipment to the value of \$28 million (Norton in Salem 1992, p. 105) but, it should be noted, from late 1964 onwards the Soviets also became more and more overt in their rapprochement policy with Turkey (FA1/256: 83, May 11, 1966; FA1/255: 98, June 3, 1967; FA1/257: 33-34, April 16, 1968), now severely disaffected by the behaviour of the United States over Cyprus.

This was the beginning of a new chapter of Soviet-Turkish relations which would continue to evolve in a more collaborative, friendly way until the demise of the Soviet Union. It is probably not coincidental that in October, 1964, Khrushchev was deposed⁴¹ and the Soviets thereafter began to follow a less volatile and much more conciliatory policy with Turkey and ultimately with the West⁴². Its policy towards Cyprus also shifted, becoming more detached and referring to the Cyprus problem more in terms of a solution for both ethnic communities (FA2/264: 8, January 2, 1968; FA1/257, July 13, 1968; FA1/270: 10-13, June 14, 1971). In other words, support which favoured the Greek Cypriots had essentially disappeared by the time of the 1974 invasion.⁴³ This did not mean that the Soviet Union had lost interest in Cyprus or vice versa; rather, their way of expressing that interest had become far more ambivalent, cautious, pragmatic and, in a sense, less predictable.

Indeed this became the new pattern in the Soviet-Cyprus relationship over the next few decades where the might of the Russian superpower could often be used by Cyprus as some form of leverage in a given circumstance but which was at its core, often mere rhetoric, more bluff than substance. The unwavering certainty of Soviet support which Khrushchev had inspired was gone, but hopes still lingered that somehow the Russians would come through for Cyprus. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union followed any course which would wound NATO and the Western alliance or help it achieve its own objectives in the Mediterranean—including encouraging Cypriot independence, becoming friendlier with Turkey, promoting Nasser in Egypt and supporting emerging

Third World states. While the importance of AKEL to the Soviet Union cannot be completely discounted, it being a ready-made conduit for Soviet influence in Cyprus and one of the most important Communist parties in the Middle East (Adams, 1971)—nevertheless this could only be a secondary concern in the uncompromising Cold War era and most especially once the Greek junta's influence began to penetrate the island. Nowhere was this better revealed than in the immediate aftermath of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 when the Soviets remained, effectively, on the sidelines, neither overtly condemning nor condoning⁴⁴.

Conclusion

In 2005 as part of the ongoing friendly relations between two islands whose history has been so greatly influenced by both their geographical locations and their affiliations during the Cold War, both real and imagined, a statue of the Cypriot President, Makarios, was presented as a gift from Cyprus to the Cuban Government. The latter installed the statue in the old city of Havana where it stands to this day. Castro and Makarios had both been an instrumental part of the Non-Aligned movement in an attempt to neutralise their countries' position in the Cold War. They had both relied on Soviet 'friendship' during those years even though Cyprus, in particular, was nominally and to all intents and purpose part of the Western sphere of influence. Both islands had also been home to nuclear weapons created and delivered by the two superpowers then engaged in their zero sum conflict. In Cuba it was of course the Soviet missiles installed in secret in 1962 whereas in Cyprus it was the nuclear weapons installed on the British base of Akrotiri, again in secret, in 1960. Did Cyprus actually become NATO's nuclear missile pad? Were the Soviets right in this? The Foreign Affairs documents from the State Archive only provide snatches from the Soviet perspective and offer little by way of what the Cypriot authorities actually thought about the situation. Until such time as more revealing documents are declassified, this can only be inferred. However, the evidence from other sources is fairly conclusive.

What we can say with certainty is that Britain used at least one of its sovereign bases on the island for just that purpose and given its close relationship with the United States and NATO, Cyprus had indeed become a potential nuclear launching pad. Moreover, by virtue of the British bases on Cyprus, of NATO/US and Soviet policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, the island had become not just a nuclear missile base, but more importantly, a nuclear target in a war not of its own making and in a war no-one, in any case, could win.

NOTES

1. The 'FA' designation is used on Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents which are housed in the Cyprus State Archives. All citations in this article prefaced by 'FA' refer to the aforementioned documents. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Cyprus and especially the staff of the Cyprus State Archives in Nicosia for their generous assistance during the three weeks I was doing my research there in July, 2009. I must add however that due to time restrictions I was unable to access any classified reports/communications between the two countries. That may have placed a significant constraint on this research insofar as being able to assess the full extent of the Cypriot Government's reaction to Soviet claims of Cyprus becoming a de facto NATO satellite. This is obviously a research project for the future.
2. Five years later the terminology being used by the Soviets in both *Pravda* and *Izvestia* was virtually identical (FA1/258:104-106 October 5, 1968). NATO was trying 'to turn Cyprus into an "unsinkable atomic-rocket aircraft carrier" spearheaded against the Arab countries, the Soviet Union and other Socialist States'.
3. Ellis, R. 'Crisis in the Mediterranean,' *EuropeNews*, September 6, 2011 <http://europenews.dk/en/node/46965> accessed September 8, 2011. See also Fenwick, S. 'Russia Sends Nuclear Subs to Patrol Cyprus Waters - Report,' *cyprusnewsreport.com*, August 25, 2011 <http://www.cyprusnewsreport.com/?q=node/4540> accessed September 8, 2011; Stratford Global Intelligence, 'Russia: 2 Nuclear Submarines Deployed to Cyprus,' August 25, 2011 <http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/201054/sitrep/20110825-russia-2-nuclear-submarines-deployed-cyprus> accessed September 1, 2011. It should be noted that not much detail about the deployment (if it actually has occurred) has been revealed.
4. Evripidou, 'EU tells Ankara to back off,' *Cyprus Mail*, September 10, 2011 <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/eu/eu-tells-ankara-back/20110909> accessed September 10, 2011.
5. Evripidou, *op.cit.*; *The National Herald*, 'Cyprus Gets U.S., Russian Backing for Drilling, Making Turkey Furious,' September 6, 2011 <http://www.thenationalherald.com/category/Cyprus-Problem> accessed September 7, 2011;
The Israeli dimension of this story is due to the bilateral agreements signed between Israel and Cyprus regarding their collaborative exploration of their respective EEZs and the current dispute Turkey has with Israel over Gaza. See Aydinli, P.& Evripidou, S. 'Cyprus in middle of regional clash,' *Cyprus Mail*, September 10, 2011 <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/cyprus-middle-regional-clash/20110907> accessed September 10, 2011.
6. On August 19, 2011, in a statement posted on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Information and Press Department.

http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/B104FCC31F6810AEC32578F40037701E accessed August 31, 2011.

7. See, for example, the report on Turkey's 2011 defense spending in *Hürriyet Daily News*, August 8, 2011 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=confident-turkey-plans-to-raise-arms-expenses-to-historic-high-2011-08-08> accessed September 1, 2011. See also Turkish PM Erdogan's angry comments to the disaffected Turkish Cypriot protesters in early February 2011, where he clearly highlighted the importance of Cyprus to Turkey in terms of 'strategic interests' (Bahceli, *Cyprus Mail*, February 5, 2011).
8. The comments were posted beneath the online article 'Greek Cyprus police hunt for suspect in US-Russia spy case' from the *Hürriyet Daily News* July 1, 2010. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=greek-cyprus-police-hunt-for-suspect-in-us-russia-spy-case-2010-07-01> accessed August 19, 2011.
A recent article in *France 24 International News* (accessed October 7, 2010) described the relationship between Russia and Cyprus in this way: "Shared Orthodox Christianity and a common historic rivalry with Turkey means the two countries have long enjoyed close relations."
9. *The Moscow Times*, July 6, 2011. <http://proxyma.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/how-a-suspected-spy-eluded-capture-in-cyprus/409771.html> accessed August 18, 2011.
10. *NDTV*, July 2, 2010 <http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/now-cyprus-hunts-for-russian-spy-paymaster-35053> accessed August 18, 2011.
11. Events such as the annual Cyprus-Russian Festival-Limassol and the Cyprus-Russian Gala (Nicosia) indicate the ongoing attempts at cultural sharing and also highlight the permanent presence of Russian nationals currently residing in Cyprus and the number of Russian tourists visiting the island (second only to Britain).
12. The high level of Russian investment in Cyprus is reflected in its investment in the "banking, energy, financial services and property sectors" amounting to 12.37 billion Euros during 2005-2010 (see *France 24 International News*, October 7, 2010). More recently, in the wake of Cyprus's recent economic crisis, it has been stated that Cyprus is seeking a significant loan (thought to be for approximately 2.5 billion Euros) from Russia (*Washington Post*, September 10, 2011) http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/markets/cyprus-finance-minister-says-russia-among-possible-foreign-lenders-to-help-service-debt/2011/09/09/gIQASg6oEK_story.html accessed September 10, 2011.
13. This was echoed the following year in comments made to Turkish journalists by the then Russian President Putin. See Soykok, J., *Journal of Turkish Weekly* January 12, 2005.
14. Labetskaya and Tarutin (2004, p. 17) refer to the fact that the Cypriot Foreign Minister, George Iacovou, had gone to Moscow shortly before the resolution was presented to the UN, allegedly to ask the Russian authorities to veto it.

15. It had already been gloomily predicted by commentators that the Greek Cypriots would vote against the Annan Plan and the Turkish Cypriots would vote for it. The then President of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos' April 7 appeal to his Greek Cypriot compatriots not to accept the Plan had been a clear harbinger of what was to come as had been the periodic opinion polls conducted on the issue.
16. It should also be noted here that this was far from the first time that the Soviet Union had supplied arms to the Greek Cypriots. The Soviets were accused of supplying arms to the Greek Cypriots by Turkish Cypriot Vice-President Kutchuk in early March 1964 (FA1/254: 135, March 13, 1964) and July 1967 (FA1/255, July 12, 1967) but this was vehemently denied at the time by both the Soviets and the Greek Cypriots. Another famous instance of Soviet supply of arms to Cyprus occurred in March and October, 1965 (Uslu, 2003, p. 192; O'Malley & Craig, 1999, p.121). Other sources of supply of arms—apart from Greece—also included Czechoslovakia.
17. *The Cold War International History Project*, established at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and its published journal (*The Bulletin of the Cold War International History Project*) have proved to be invaluable sources of information as they focus on recently declassified Cold War information from many different countries particularly the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc. However, I have yet to uncover any extensive Soviet files on Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, the Mediterranean or NATO.
18. The bibliography is so vast that I can only cite a few works published in the last ten years which represent the British and/or U.S. perspectives on the Cyprus issue: Dimitrakis 2010; Miller 2009; Asmussen, 2008; Faustmann and Peristianis, 2006; Mallinson, 2005; Uslu, 2003; James, 2002; Nicolet, 2001.
19. The Soviet Union, for example, championed the Egyptian cause during the Suez crisis in 1956 primarily as a way of limiting British and French influence in the Middle East (Donaldson & Noguee, 2005, p. 84). The Soviets were also very concerned about and sought to weaken/destabilise the Baghdad Pact (or CENTO) which was essentially an anti-Soviet alliance between Britain, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan, aimed at containing Soviet influence/expansion in the Middle East.
20. On June 28, 1953, Makarios had affirmed that if Greece could not be more proactive in the Cypriot cause then the Cypriots would stretch out 'both right and left hands to accept help from both East and West' (Stefanidis, 1999, p. 44). The allusions were obvious and are indicative of the Archbishop's willingness to consider all avenues of assistance regardless of political ideology. This is also borne out by his continuing good relations with AKEL once he became President of the Republic.
21. See for example, the comments made by President Makarios to Soviet journalists in Cyprus on October 10, 1963 referring to the trade, economic and cultural contacts which had already been established (FA1/254, October 10, 1963). See also references made to the Soviet-Cypriot Trade Protocol for 1963 signed in Nicosia on January 25, 1963 (FA1/256: 79-85, January 30, 1964) and the Soviet-Cypriot cultural

- agreement 1966 signed in Moscow on May 10, 1966 (FA1/257: 2, December 30, 1967).
22. By the end of the decade, the numbers of Cypriot students studying in the Soviet Union was around 300 (Norton in Salem, 1992, p. 105).
 23. This was still in evidence in the most recent parliamentary elections on May 22, 2011, when AKEL slightly increased its percentage of the vote to 32.67% as compared to its 2006 election result of 31.3%.
http://www.akel.org.cy/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=7824&lang=13 accessed September 1, 2011.
 24. This was, in fact, to be expected from an Orthodox Archbishop who had in the 1950s been one of the leaders of the right-wing EOKA movement and is moreover no different to Egyptian President Nasser's pro-Soviet stance abroad and domestic anti-Communist stance.
 25. The irony was that Makarios was actually 'dependent on the communist vote of AKEL' which constituted approximately 30% of the total vote in any election' (See Fouskas, 2001, p. 117).
 26. As early as August, 1961, U.S. President Kennedy had, for example, expressed grave concerns about the situation in Cyprus particularly with regards to a possible Communist takeover (see Brands, 1987, p. 350).
 27. A further complaint was made in October, 1967 (FA1/255: 128A, October 9, 1967) against the local publication of the autobiography of Stalin's daughter who had defected to the United States. The tone again is presumptive, demanding and cautionary. The following month the Soviet Embassy was protesting about the deliberate act of arson which destroyed an Embassy car (FA1/992: 104, November 28, 1967) and an explosion at the Soviet Show Hall in Nicosia which caused considerable damage (FA1/992: 126, December 12, 1967).
 28. The actual strategic planning for this eventuality had occurred much earlier, in the 1950s. See Varnava, 2010, p. 87; Moore, 2001, p. 62.
 29. What I find particularly surprising in this whole narrative about the 'top secret' nature of the British operations is the existence of the contemporary press reports about the nuclear stockpile. Nearly forty years later, these facts were basically "uncovered" for the first time by scholars (see Rhodes 2000 and Moore 2001) working from recently declassified Foreign Office documents. At the time of this 'discovery', former Cypriot President Clerides, who had been an active participant in the first government of The Republic of Cyprus, restricted himself to ambivalent statements such as "Britain might in the past have stored nuclear weapons at its bases in Cyprus" (Christou, *Cyprus Mail*, January 4, 2000) without being categorical about it. How could the 1960 press reports have been so easily forgotten? Moreover, according to Varnava (2010, p. 102) "the existence of nuclear weapons...was made known in the House of

- Commons”, presumably in 1960. Unless there has been a collective amnesia on Cyprus, it is very difficult to account for the secret that was no secret which became a secret again.
30. A Cypriot Embassy report on the Turkish reaction to the Cuban Missiles Crisis dated November 5, 1962 (FA1/35: 9) matter-of-factly reports on the necessity of establishing NATO nuclear bases in both Greece and Turkey but makes no mention of any such bases in Cyprus.
 31. In the years that followed, the Soviets made constant references to NATO’s devious schemes for Cyprus, to the need to expel the military bases from Cyprus and completely demilitarise the island (see FA1/256: 80, May 16, 1966; FA1/255, July 12, 1967; FA1/255, September 30, 1967; FA1/261: 225-228, February 20, 1969; FA1/261: 256-257, February 25, 1969). The emphasis, however, on the nuclear aspect of the story seemed to disappear. In fact, the terms ‘nuclear missile pad’ and ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier’ are much more prominent during the 1963-1964 period and may be a symptom firstly of the Cuban Missiles Crisis in 1962 and secondly of the resulting Soviet obsession with the de-nuclearisation of the Mediterranean. The dominant role of Khrushchev in the resolution of Cuban crisis and his apparent keen support of Makarios and Cyprus is unlikely to be coincidental as there seems to have been a distinct shift in the Soviet policy towards Cyprus and also in Soviet foreign policy overall, once Khrushchev was deposed in October, 1964.
 32. See James (2002) and Soulioti (2006) and Markides (2001) for a discussion of the Amendments. For a very different analysis of the early Cyprus Republic see Moran (2001).
 33. An accusation which they categorically denied on March 7 (FA1/254: 135, March 13, 1964).
 34. Evriviades (1997, p. 60) highlights the little known, extensive and constant presence of the Soviet navy in the early 1960s: “The Soviet Mediterranean fleet...played cat and mouse games with the Sixth Fleet while a more deadly game was played in the depths of the Eastern Mediterranean by Soviet and U.S. conventional and nuclear armed submarines.”
 35. Makarios seemed to share this perspective, remaining committed to the idea of a NATO-free Cyprus. On February 24, 2011, President Christofias upheld that position, vetoing a decision made by the Cypriot Parliament to join NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. While he gave no reasons for the veto, members of AKEL made it clear that NATO’s perceived involvement in the invasion and division of Cyprus made the issue very problematic. In addition, Christofias’s policy of demilitarizing the island necessarily precludes participation in NATO.
 36. The U.S. and Britain had been so determined to keep the Soviets out of the Cyprus problem they had insisted that a NATO peacekeeping force be placed on the island rather than a UN force. Soviet involvement via the UN Security Council (Brands,

- 1987, p. 351) had to be avoided at all costs. However, due to the vehement opposition of the Makarios administration and the continuing Turkish threat to invade Cyprus, a UN peacekeeping force was secured instead and began to arrive in March, 1964.
37. This was much more conciliatory than the far more threatening statement Khrushchev made in the Kremlin on July 8, 1964 in which he warned Turkey of the 'dangerous chain reaction' which would be caused if Turkey were to invade Cyprus (*The Times*, July 9, 1964).
 38. Zubok & Pleshakov (1996, p. 253) describe Khrushchev's 'two favourite political tools' as 'nuclear brinkmanship and strategic deception'. Since 1955 the United States Government and three Presidents had had to contend with Khrushchev's unswerving dedication to worldwide Socialist revolution and his determination to challenge the smug dominance of the West in any way possible and anywhere possible. Hence the Soviet confrontation with the United States in Berlin, Cuba and now Cyprus. See also Gaddis, 1978, pp. 232, 246. O'Malley & Craig (1999, p. 117) refer to a White House meeting on August 19 in which "Soviet threats" were described as having "brought the issue to the boil".
 39. By the early 1970s, economic concerns in the USSR, plus increasing problems with China, had led the Soviets to adopt a more "relaxed", conciliatory approach to the United States (the policy of 'détente') which finally led to the end of the Vietnam War (Donaldson & Noguee, 2005, pp. 94-99; Gaddis, 1978, pp. 254, 265-271) and the diminishment of overtly confrontational policies.
 40. By that time, it has been argued, that the Soviets who had always been the main military threat or deterrence to the Turks, had effectively given them the go-ahead (Nicolet, 2001, pp. 442-443).
 41. I am not suggesting that Khrushchev's handling of the Cyprus crisis led to his deposition, but I think it may have been a factor. Given that there had been ongoing concerns amongst the Communist élite for years about his heavy-handed approach in foreign policy, his expansionist ideology which had placed the Soviet Union on the brink of nuclear war more than once and his overall daredevil approach of bluff and counter-bluff, it is not surprising that, two months after yet another threat to make war (to defend Cyprus), he was finally ousted.
 42. According to Edmunds (1975, p. 37), for the post-Khrushchev Soviet leadership, it was imperative that in foreign policy "there were to be no more games of bluff."
 43. The right-wing, rabidly anti-Communist military dictatorship in Greece during 1967-1974 and its direct (and increasing) involvement in Greek Cypriot politics reinforced this new Soviet approach with more than one Cypriot Foreign Ministry report pointing to this inevitable conclusion. (FA1/255, July 12, 1967; FA1/257: 8-9, November 22, 1967). A letter from the Cyprus Embassy in Moscow ended with these words: "So long as the present regime in Greece exists, the Soviet attitude on Cyprus

is expected to be anti-Greek.” (FA2/264: 8, January 2, 1968). But this was not the only reason. It made far more sense to woo the larger and potentially more strategically important Turkey not only for the obvious benefits of mutual trade and commerce but also because of Turkey’s importance to both the United States and NATO.

44. The Soviet Union’s responses to the events of July and August, 1974 which saw the island invaded and divided by Turkey were decidedly lukewarm (see FA2/266: 166-170, August, 1974). Despite the presence of their warships near Cyprus, they, like the US Sixth Fleet, made no moves to intervene militarily. Instead, the Soviets restricted themselves by and large to statements made at the United Nations and accusations levelled at NATO and the Greek Government for the debacle (O’Malley & Craig, 1999, pp. 174, 177; FA1/274: 258-260, August 22, 1974). On the eve of the second wave of the invasion, Acting President Clerides made a desperate offer to the Soviet Union of a Soviet military base on Cyprus. This was flatly refused by the Soviet Government which claimed they wouldn’t intervene except as part of a joint U.S.-Soviet intervention (Nicolet, 2001, pp. 437-238). Times had changed. Material assistance was offered after the second Turkish invasion (FA1/275: 4, October 18, 1974; FA1/275: 20, November 1, 1974; FA1/275: 39, December 10, 1974; see also support from Cuban Government: FA1/133: 92, September 16, 1974) and regular calls for the withdrawal of foreign troops and the complete demilitarisation of the island were made at the UN and via the Soviet press. Depending on the interpretation of events, either the new Soviet-Turkish relationship or the new Soviet-U.S. relationship now superseded all other concerns, even what used to be (for the Soviet leadership) vital, ideological ones.

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