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The Perception of Great Power Politics through EOKA Leaflets (1955-1959)*

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, the primary sources are the main tool for a historian to reconstruct the past. It is essential however to bear in mind that the sources do not depict the whole

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reality. The ability to perceive the reality in its wholeness is something that seems impossible. It's in the human nature to create a picture of the reality in which the person or a state is the basic axis and everything revolves around it. Not because of an egocentric behavior but because the individual perceives the reality according to its knowledge, character and critical mind.

The same is to be applied for the EOKA¹ leaflets too. Their author wrote down the reality the way he perceived it at the specific time, subjected to the limitations of his purpose, the targeted group and the means he was using. This analysis will focus on the reasons why EOKA felt the need to comment on the Great Power politics. What purpose did the leader of the Organisation think that an international analysis would serve?

Writing the leaflets

First of all, who were the people writing the leaflets of EOKA? Under the *nom de guerre* Dighenis was the Cypriot retired colonel of the Greek Army Georgios Grivas. Grivas was writing not only the leaflets under the *nom de guerre* Dighenis, but also almost all the leaflets signed by EOKA. In addition, the need to fight off the British propaganda and to guide the Cypriots after the deportation of Archbishop Makarios (March 1956), compelled Grivas to create another Organization, PEKA,² in August 1956. PEKA was fully controlled by Georgios Grivas too and only at the latest stages of the struggle did its headquarters in Nicosia gain autonomy to compose leaflets without Grivas' *a priori* approval³. Even then of course PEKA didn't have its own political line.

Documenting the need for armed struggle inside Cyprus

However, Dighenis was not actually the man responsible for the planning and formation of the diplomatic policy about Cyprus inside the island and internationally. According to the decisions of the meeting of the secret Struggle Council in July 1952, Archbishop Makarios was responsible for the political aspect of the struggle whereas Georgios Grivas was responsible for the military part, its planning and execution. Thus, since Archbishop Makarios in cooperation with the Greek Government, was responsible for the political documentation of the claim, Grivas, through his leaflets, had another cause. Not to convince of course the Cypriots for the need of Enosis,⁴ since all the Greek Cypriots were already in favor of it, decades before the launch of the struggle but to explain to them why the armed struggle, a radical way of action, was necessary in order for the goal to be achieved, in pursuit of public approval.

Great Power Politics

Sometimes, in order to be convincing, Dighenis made use of the international situation and the politics of the Great Powers. Of course his analysis was not irrelevant to Makarios' one. However, despite the fact that, as we know from his memoirs,⁵ he disagreed with some political choices of Athens and Makarios, mostly at the later stages of 1955-59 period, he remained loyal to their political line in order to avoid creating a schism among the Greeks. In the leaflets of EOKA there is not even a hint of disagreement with the political line of Makarios. On the contrary, many leaflets end, by reminding that Makarios was the only representative of the Cypriots.

In his first and thus important proclamation of about 250 words of April 1st, 1955, Dighenis was calling all the Cypriots, with no exceptions, to support the armed struggle in order to show to the rest of the world that they could not "bear the yoke any more". Among examples of the Greek history which called for armed action, we

find the first example of how EOKA perceived the Great Power politics and the international diplomacy. Dighenis was calling the “brave Cypriots” to attain liberty “by their own hands and their blood”, despite the fact that the international diplomacy was “unfair and ignoble”.

Dighenis, through his leaflets throughout the years of the armed struggle, repeated frequently this stereotype of the “unfair and ignoble” international diplomacy. This was justified by the feeling of bitterness Greeks were experiencing after the World War II. Greeks felt that they had been deceived and that their allies didn’t recognize the heavy losses the country suffered from, during the war and the cost of the consequent civil war.⁶ They also felt that the slogan of self-determination, in the name of which the Allies called the nations to fight against the Axis powers, became an empty spirit after the end of the war. Moreover, the fact that EOKA perceived London and Washington preferring Ankara to Athens, was prompting the Organisation to use sentences in its leaflets such as this:

“Two great Powers, America and England, which are ambitious to be leaders of the world [...], for material interests are kicking and offend their sincere allies, who saved them repeatedly from total destruction, while are embracing former bitter enemies. However, the time will come”.⁷

What was this warning about? Obviously EOKA was implying that when US or NATO would try to use its bases in Greece, the Greek government should not consent. Or in a potential Cold War crisis in the Middle East, Greece should not help NATO. This threat was an outcome of the understanding that Turkey was more important than Greece in the geostrategic planning of NATO and the USA, mainly

through the Baghdad pact and its strategic position between the Soviet Union and the oil producing countries of the Gulf. In this context, EOKA was trying to remind the Western allies that Turkey was not a trustworthy ally like Greece, as was proven by the two World Wars, and that the bases in Greece were as important as the Turkish bases.

Before the last recourse of Greece to the UN in 1958⁸, another leaflet of Dighenis repeats the same accusations in the same tone:

“The Tories colonialists are cowards. They are afraid of the upcoming debate in the UN. They are afraid because they will hear: ‘You are untrustworthy, having violated your signatures in international treaties for the liberty of the peoples’ [...] They are ignoble. Their American allies are dragged by them and thus being jointly responsible with the criminal Tories. The noble American nation has nowadays the misfortune to be ruled by the Eisenhower - Dalles duet which drives them to disaster”.⁹

Despite the hard tone it is essential to note one thing: In some of his leaflets Dighenis tried to differentiate the British and American people from their Governments. EOKA was just accusing the Tories and the “Eisenhower – Dalles duet”. This discloses the belief, or merely the hope, of many Greeks, including Grivas and Makarios, that a change in the Government of the USA or the UK would bring a change on their Cyprus policies.¹⁰ This, once more, was a call to the Cypriots to reinforce the Organisation in order to persist with the struggle until the upcoming elections in the UK.

However, another remark should be made: In its leaflets EOKA was accusing the governments in London and Washington. It even called the Greek government not to allow the US ships to use Greek harbors. But this was not a rejection of the whole western world, neither an alignment with the Soviets. EOKA wanted to show that the troubles caused to the Western alliance due to the Cyprus issue was an outcome of the policy implemented by the Governments of the western states. EOKA's call for Greece to withdraw from NATO was merely a means of compelling the Western alliance to accept the Greek demands on Cyprus. That's why in EOKA's leaflets we read about Tories and the American government and not about the British and the American peoples. That's why EOKA was underlining that Greece alliance with Turkey and the UK could be real only after Enosis was achieved.

In its leaflets EOKA seems to have understood the way Great Power Politics were functioning but refused to leave the Cyprus issue to become a problem depending on the strategic needs of the Great Powers. Almost in every leaflet, from the first through the last one, EOKA repeated that the cause was just and right and at the same time it tried to expose the hypocrisy of the Great Powers. The most obvious contradiction noted by EOKA leaflets was the example of Eastern Germany. While the Prime Minister of the UK was asking for self-determination for the German people, he was not ready to concede self-determination to the Cypriots.¹¹ EOKA made use of this detail to prove once again "the Great Powers' slyness" and to document the need of its action as a means of opposing the unfair Anglo-American policy towards Cyprus. This was also made clear by a leaflet signed by EOKA, which was circulated the last months of 1958 titled "For the allies of the colonialists". It ended: "In Cyprus freedom is fighting against colonialism. And as always happens the first will prevail".¹²

Consequently, through its perception of Great Power politics, EOKA widened the purpose of its struggle. The Cypriots were fighting not only in order to achieve Enosis, not only against injustice but also against international colonialism. EOKA was declaring that it was not just a nationalist movement but an anti-colonial one as well.¹³ Highlighting the anti-colonial spirit of the struggle was serving a crucial purpose: To show to the Cypriots that they were not alone in this battle against colonialism and that other peoples revolted as well when they faced injustice and colonialism. Even the Americans revolted against colonialism as was indicated by a leaflet circulated in late 1957.¹⁴ In addition to this, on March 1957, after the third Greek recourse to UN, Dighenis published a leaflet with the comments of the members of the UN about EOKA, profoundly to show the Cypriots that their struggle was considered by the international community.¹⁵

Finally, the leaflets include virtually no references to the Soviet Union. Despite the declared opposition to the ideology of communism and its alleged branch in the island, the communist party of AKEL, EOKA did not comment on the Soviet policy on the Cyprus issue. We believe that this choice was made because the Soviet Union and the countries of the Warsaw Pact were supporting Greece when the Cyprus issue was being discussed in the UN. This caused difficulties to EOKA because siding up with the Soviet Union would confirm the British allegations that the armed struggle in Cyprus was serving the interests of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the Greek Cypriots would decline such a choice as controversial. EOKA couldn't accuse the leadership of AKEL for collaborating with the British against the armed struggle and at the same time thank the Soviet Union for supporting the Cypriots' claims. Of course it was understood that the Soviet Union was supporting Greece for its own interests, in order to empower the communist party in Greece and to cause troubles between NATO

allies. This was highlighted in a leaflet circulated by PEKA which accused both the Anglo-Americans and the Soviets for being “tyrants”.¹⁶ Another PEKA leaflet which accused the “ Eisenhower-Dulles duet for plotting in order to put the Cyprus issue aside, in connivance with the Neonazi¹⁷ Tories”, concludes: “Nowadays international Nazism revives vis-à-vis international Communism”.¹⁸ This sentence is believed to encompass EOKA’s perceptions of Great Power Politics.: Opposition to international Communism and the Soviet Union on the grounds of ideological reasons, as well as opposition to the Western Great Powers as long as they did not honor their promises for self-determination for every people.

Conclusion

EOKA was not a policy-making player but it rather echoed the political line of Archbishop Makarios and Athens. What was different was the style of the vocabulary, the target group and the purpose of the analyses. Of course the aim was not just to expose the Great Power politics to the Cypriots, but also to explain how these affected the armed struggle and what the point of view of the armed Organisation was. In order for the cause to be justified, EOKA tried to nurture enmity against the USA and the UK among the Cypriots. It was vital for the armed struggle to show the people of Cyprus that the Great Powers did not have the strength and the will to solve the Cyprus issue. Consequently, EOKA attempted to convince the Cypriots that the armed struggle was the only means the Greeks held in order to compel the Great Powers to give in.¹⁹

Moreover, in EOKA leaflets we do not observe its leader’s perceptions of Great Power politics but rather the way the Organisation presented it to the Cypriots in the context of the limited space of a leaflet, aiming to prove that the armed struggle was

indispensable. Thus, Great Power politics were presented by EOKA as “bargain between sneaky slavers” and as “conspiracy” against human rights. Having realized that the Cyprus issue was tangled in the Great Power politics and that this made it more difficult to be solved, EOKA put forward the just cause of the struggle in order to expose the contradiction between justice and injustice, colonialism and anti colonialism. Moreover, another goal of EOKA’s analyses was to deal with the British propaganda which was claiming that the armed struggle was useless and that Britain could not make concessions to “violence”. Against this allegation EOKA’s reply was that the Organisation was the factor that compelled the Great Powers to pay the necessary attention to the Cyprus issue, mainly through the UN.²⁰ In addition, by accusing the governments of the USA and the UK for supporting Turkey, EOKA created the context for the justification of the argument that armed struggle was indispensable. It projected justice against injustice, the rights of the peoples against colonialism, the need for freedom against geostrategic needs.

¹ ΕΟΚΑ: Εθνική Οργάνωση Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών, *Ethniki Organosi Kiprion Agoniston*, National Organisation of Cypriot fighters.

² ΡΕΚΑ: Πολιτική Επιτροπή Κυπριακού Αγώνος, *Politiki Epitropi Kipriakou Agonos*, Political Committee of Cyprus Struggle.

³ In charge of ΡΕΚΑ in Nicosia were Renos Lysiotis (August 1956- November 1956), Mihalakis Maratheftis (November 1956-April 1957) and Tassos Papadopoulos (April 1957-March 1959).

⁴ Union with Greece.

⁵ Georgios Grivas-Dighenis, *Memoirs of the EOKA Struggle 1955-1959*, Athens: n.p., 1961, (in Greek).

⁶ For example see leaflets (in Greek): “Owed Answer” Dighenis, 9/4/56 and “When the Greeks were fighting...”, ΡΕΚΑ, August 1957 and “To Von Storrs”, ΡΕΚΑ, 11/8/57 and “Who is the real danger”, ΡΕΚΑ, January 1957.

⁷ “The Anglo-American conspiracy will be crushed on the strong will...”, ΡΕΚΑ, November 1957 (in Greek). Another leaflet in Greek with the same meaning is: “The Americans want to use the Greek airfields...”, ΡΕΚΑ, September 1957.

⁸ Greece, after strong pressure by the Cypriot leaders, especially Archbishop Makarios, and since was convinced that the recourse to the UN would break the

British intransigence on the future of the island, decided to place the Cyprus issue to the UN, five successively times from 1954 to 1958.

⁹ “To the Cypriot people”, Dighenis, December 1957, (in Greek).

¹⁰ This was not of course a Greek illusion. The Labour and the Liberals in the House of Commons were stiffly opposing the government’s handling of the Cyprus issue and supporting Cypriot self-determination. Apart from that the Cypriot newspaper “Eleftheria”, on 9 June 1956, republished a poll which was first published in Daily Express. According to that poll 50,5% of the British people were dissatisfied with their governments’ handling of the Cyprus issue and only 26,5% were satisfied.

¹¹ “No comments”, PEKA, 23/6/57, (in Greek).

¹² In the same leaflet it was also written that: “Angloamericans and their allies must know that: [...]– The peace in this corner of the Mediterranean is not possible to be achieved and the Angloamerican colonialism will be stroke until we kick it out of our island. – if the colonialists think that [...] they will weigh us down [...] our insistence will become a rock onto which the Angloamerican colonialism will be crushed”.

¹³ In this anti-colonial context EOKA did not hesitate to accuse the British Government’s “piratic raid” in Suez calling every people under foreign rule to revolt.

¹⁴ “In 1776 Americans had EOKA and PEKA”, PEKA, July 1957, (in Greek).

¹⁵ “What had been said in the UN about us, the ‘terrorists’, Dighenis, 16/3/57, (in Greek).

¹⁶ “What are the US battleships doing in Greek ports?...”, PEKA, August 1957, (in Greek).

¹⁷ The accusation that the British were using Nazi techniques in Cyprus is common in EOKA’s the leaflets. On this basis the Organisation was calling for a “Nuremberg trial” for the British too.

¹⁸ “Not even a drop of Greek blood should be shed...”, PEKA, November 1957, (in Greek).

¹⁹ After the rejection of the second Greek recourse to the UN, on 29 September 1955 a leaflet was circulated in Greek: “Since the international diplomacy is proved to be craven, we shall show that we know how to fight and die. Since some violate their signatures on international treaties, like common crooks, we shall follow the path of honor and sacrifice. Since the Americans and the British are doing an illegitimate dealing against the weak and the slaves, we shall count on our moral power and on our right [...] Now that the UN has eliminated every other means for us to gain our freedom, there is no other left, than to shed our blood. And this blood will weigh upon the Americans and the British”. Spiros Papageorgiou, *Archive of the illegal documents of the Cyprus struggle, 1955-1959* (Nicosia: Epiphaniou publications, 1984), 61 – in Greek.

²⁰ This confession was made by the Labour MP Richard Crossman in the House of Commons during the debate of 5 May 1955.