

William Mallinson

**US Interests, British Acquiescence
and the Invasion of Cyprus**

Introduction

The latest batch of papers released by the reticent British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to the National Archives for public inspection further substantiates earlier claims that at the end of the day the British and US governments connived backstage to accept and even condone the military objectives of the Turkish government in Cyprus. That Britain had been biased in favour of the Turkish position since at least the mid-fifties has of course already been established¹, as has Anglo-American collaboration from the mid-sixties, when the US had made it clear that there would be no question of using the 6th Fleet to prevent a Turkish invasion, while the British would not allow the UN forces in Cyprus to repel an invasion and would withdraw its non-UN troops into their bases². The controversial Henry Kissinger, often depicted as the main behind-the-scenes enabler of the Turkish invasion, had already stated in 1957 that the US should be able to rely on Cyprus as a staging post for the Middle East³. The latest papers, despite some disquieting lacunae, have negative implications for Greece's foreign policy today, particularly because of the current studied lack of reaction to increased Turkish incursions into Greek territory. As parts of the following account will intimate by default, the devil is often in the detail, so often ignored by headline-seeking and deadline-conscious journalists. The main points to emerge from the quagmire of papers are: the British govern-

1. See William Mallinson, "Turkish Invasions, Britain, Cyprus and the Treaty of Guarantee", *Synthesis: Review of Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, London School of Economics and Political Science, London 1999.

2. William Mallinson, "A Partitioned Cyprus Forty Years After Qualified Sovereignty: Reality versus Morality", *Defensor Pacis*, Issue 7, January 2001.

3. Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, Harper Brothers, New York 1957, p. 165.

ment's foreknowledge of Turkish plans through the Joint Intelligence Committee; its admission that legally, it was bound to take joint action with the Turks to restore constitutional order; its military dithering; its indignation at Turkish behaviour, leading nevertheless to acquiescence and finally "agreement" with US objectives; Kissinger's double-sided dealings and express procrastination to afford the Turkish government and military the time needed to fulfill its objectives; attempts to keep President Makarios out of the picture; fear —often used as an excuse to help Turkey— of the Soviet Union; pressure-bordering on diplomatic threats —on both the Junta and the Karamanlis government not to defend Cyprus and fight Turkey; high-level French irritation at Britain's stonewalling in the face of the French government's efforts to become involved diplomatically; fear of a future more independent Greek government relying on French armaments; the US Ambassador, Tasca's, anger at the Turkish government; suspicions that the Greek Prime Minister, Karamanlis, did not wish Makarios to return to Cyprus; and British doubts about the Sovereign Base Areas.

Taking French Leave

Following the "Sampson coup" of 15 July, the British government, obviously rattled by a clear violation of the Treaty of Guarantee and intelligence reports of Turkish military movements, considered various courses of action. While President Makarios was in the very process of being escorted by the British to safety, the FCO legal advisers were writing that the Turkish request for joint action appeared to be a legitimate one, and that the Treaty authorized "the Turks to take unilateral action", if joint action were refused⁴. As a guarantor power, Britain was clearly obliged to continue to recognize Makarios, since it could hardly use its usual criterion of "having affective control of a country" to recognize a regime that had taken over in violation of a settlement which it itself had guaranteed. Such legal constraints did not of course apply to the US, whose foreign policy was essentially in Kissinger's pocket, particularly since the Watergate scandal was coming to a head. Since

4. Fairbrother to Cornish, 16 July 1974, FCO 9/1953, file WSC 3/548/13, *memorandum*.

Britain's intelligence services knew of a likely Turkish invasion (and had informed the FCO)⁵, so, of course, did the Americans, at the very least. Communication between Kissinger and the British Foreign Secretary, Callaghan, was fast and furious. Kissinger told the latter on 16 July that he "was concerned to avoid legitimizing the new regime in Cyprus *for as long as possible*" but that he "was concerned to keep other powers from becoming involved in the situation for as long as possible"⁶. In a typical sign of diplomatic "piggy-backing", Callaghan actually asked Kissinger to give careful thought to what "might be done with President Makarios"⁷. Earlier that day, Callaghan had agreed that Makarios could be flown to "the Sovereign Base Areas", suggesting that he then be put on a warship, rather than being flown to Britain⁸. In the event, Makarios was flown to Malta, arriving at night on the same day. Although Makarios wished to fly straight on to London, he was "persuaded" to stay the night, not leaving until the next morning. Part of this persuasion included the specious and false reason "that the aircraft had one or two problems"⁹. Although not yet proven, it is likely that Britain and the US (or rather, Kissinger), were manically "co-coordinating" their positions, and that they needed Makarios out of the way for even a few hours. Certainly, he would have been an embarrassment if he had been in immediate contact with the United Nations, where Britain and the US were frenetically doing their best to avoid a resolution calling on Britain to exercise her right to intervene militarily. Perhaps trickily for the British government, the UN Secretary General, Waldheim, told the British Ambassador to the UN that the very threat of "the promise of British military power being deployed would lead to a swift Greek withdrawal and

5. Thomson to Private Secretary, 19 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1894, file WSC 1/10, part E, *record of meeting*.

6. FCO to Washington, 16 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1891, file WSC 1/10, part B, *telegram no. 1538*.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, FCO to Nicosia, 16 July 1974, *telegram no. 145*.

9. *Ibid.*, Valletta to FCO, 16 July 1974, *telegram no. 207*. This story was verified to me by a former member of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service, who does not wish to be named. He told me that instructions were sent from London to delay the aeroplane. Then the excuse of "technical problems" was found. As President Makarios stepped off the plane, he was heard to say: "Another triumph for British diplomacy!"

probably the collapse of the Nicosia regime”¹⁰. The Ambassador referred in a telegram to the FCO that there were moves in the Security Council to try to get agreement on a resolution which would “fall well short of what Makarios would like” *before he (Makarios) got to New York* [my italics]¹¹. At the same time, in a “Top Secret” memorandum, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the FCO, Killick, wrote that “the Ministry of Defence (MOD) thought that it would probably be militarily possible to restore Makarios to power”, but that the MOD would probably want to “put in a lot more” as an insurance¹². Killick also wrote, perhaps ominously, “that continued support for Makarios in circumstances in which we could not effectively restore him to power would prevent us from establishing the working relations with the regime effectively in control which we would need in order to maintain the SBA’s [Sovereign Base Areas]”¹³. He continued: “Makarios outside Cyprus might move closer to the Soviet Union and the latter would be in a position to exploit this situation in the Eastern Mediterranean area”¹⁴. This suggests that at this early stage, the British government was in a quandary about what to do, yet was nevertheless using a possibly illusory Soviet threat as a reason to support Makarios’ return, if they had to.

The Quandary Continues

Despite the FCO’s legal advice (above) that the Turkish request for joint action appeared to be legitimate, the British were keeping their options open. A crucial meeting was held at 10, Downing Street after dinner on Wednesday 17 July, attended by the British and Turkish Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and high level officials, at which Mr. Ecevit requested that Britain show its solidarity with Turkey by allowing Turkish armed forces to send her forces to Cyprus through the British bases, failing which the alternative was unilateral action. Despite the legal ad-

10. Richard to FCO, 17 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1892, file WSC 10, part C, *telegram no. 786*.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Killick to Goodison, 17 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1915, file WSC 1/10, part C, *memorandum*.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

vice (above) that if joint action was refused, Turkey could take unilateral action, this latter possibility was not raised by the British at this meeting; quite the contrary, the Foreign Secretary, responsibly (at this stage), refused to offer use of the British bases and pushed the Turks to support a meeting of the guarantor powers, including, therefore Greece. Despite several attempts, Ecevit stonewalled, claiming that he had had no luck when he had spoken to the Greek Prime Minister, Androutsopoulos, in Brussels. The British Prime Minister, Mr. Wilson, then pointedly asked Mr. Ecevit whether his problem in sitting down with the Greeks was a political one with his own parliament. *Revealingly, Ecevit conceded that this “was one factor”*. Clearly, at this stage, the British were keen to go by the book and restore constitutional order as per the Treaty of Guarantee, while the Turks were stonewalling. Indeed, at the meeting, the latter refused to even recognize Greece as a guarantor power. Quite correctly, Wilson rejected a Turkish request for a Turko-British statement condemning Greece (the Greek government had vehemently denied any involvement in the Sampson coup, and evidence suggesting the contrary had not yet emerged), stating that this “would not be the right prelude to a tripartite meeting”. The meeting broke up at 12:30 on the morning of 18 July without agreement, let alone a joint communiqué¹⁵.

Kissinger’s “idiosyncrasies” and British Acquiescence

Meanwhile, Kissinger was active on the telephone, one of his favourite diplomatic tools. In a revealing comment on his *modus operandi*, the British Ambassador to Washington, Ramsbotham, wrote after a telephone conversation with Kissinger on 17 July:

My conversation with Kissinger was apparently not recorded in the State Dept., and we have just received the somewhat bizarre request that we should give the gist of it to Sisco [the US Assistant Secretary of State who was to shuttle furiously from capital to capital, firefighting] before he leaves for London ... I fear it is all too likely, given Kissinger’s idio-

15. *Ibid.*, *Record of Conversation of 22 July 1974 between Prime Minister, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and senior officials with Turkish homologues, 27 July, 1974.*

syncratic methods of working, that he may not record the telephonic conversation he has with the Secretary of State. I hope therefore that you can arrange for the gist of these to be telegraphed to me as soon as possible ... otherwise, improbable though it may seem, I fear there will be a danger of both the State Dept., and this Embassy working in the dark with all the resultant risks of confusion and misunderstanding¹⁶.

This illustrates the danger of one-man shows in diplomacy; not only was Kissinger not a trained diplomat, but he often by-passed the proper channels of communication, thereby obfuscating his own privately agreed agendas. It is however the telephone conversation referred to above that reveals Kissinger's agenda:

Kissinger seemed puzzled as to why we were working to move so quickly and in such absolute support of Makarios ... it was surely a mistake to commit ourselves now to Makarios and thus narrow our options when it was far from certain that Makarios could return to power. Kissinger was also concerned at the line we were taking about the withdrawal of Greek officers in the National Guard. Whatever role they had been playing, they had at least acted as a force against communist infiltration in Cyprus. Kissinger was clearly suspicious that Makarios, returned to power in those circumstances, would not hesitate to regard the Russians [sic] as his saviours and allow an already strong communist party to gain further strength ... he hoped we could agree to play the hand more slowly¹⁷.

This shows clearly that Kissinger was playing for time, trying to keep Makarios out of the picture, and, crucially, supporting the National Guard, when it had itself spearheaded the coup. He disagreed with the British view that the Greek officers in the National Guard should be withdrawn. Here, the reason was clear: to give Turkey an excuse to invade. Interestingly, unlike the FCO, which was of the view that Makarios outside Cyprus might move closer to the Soviet Union¹⁸, Kissinger

16. *Ibid.*, Washington to FCO, 17 July 1974, *telegram no. 2416*.

17. *Ibid.*, Washington to FCO, 17 July 1974, *telegram no. 2414*.

18. Killick to Goodison, *op.cit.*, 17 July 1974.

apparently thought the precise opposite, namely that if restored to power, Makarios would regard the Soviet Union as his saviour. Whether Kissinger genuinely believed this, or was using the “Communist threat” argument to prolong the crisis, must be left to the reader. At any event, he now clearly had doubts about Sampson and wished for Clerides (the President of the Cypriot Parliament) to take over from Makarios¹⁹.

All this was happening while Turkey was blatantly preparing to invade Cyprus, without any tripartite talks. Kissinger’s delaying tactics, before, during and following the invasion are brought into bizarre relief in a message he sent to Callaghan just after the Turkish landing on the night of 19 to 20 July:

[...] here is the message you and I discussed. It is for your scrapbook. I was about to send it to you when our Ottoman friends cut loose ... it is essential that we work closely together in all of this so that we do not set in motion any train of events before we have a precise view of what we want to achieve ... if pressure from the outside should be brought to bear to restore Makarios, this will only solidify the regime in Athens²⁰.

Apart from the obvious stalling tactics, the argument that Makarios’ return would “solidify the regime in Athens” is particularly specious, since it could be equally argued that Makarios’ return would hasten the regime’s downfall. In any case, first, Kissinger gave no reasoning to support his contention and, second, the regime was in any case on the point of collapse, regardless of Makarios’ position. As it was, Constantine Karamanlis, in “exile” in Paris, must already have been making preparations to return to Athens.

Two days after the Turkish invasion, Kissinger was, bizarrely, still doing all he could to allow the Turkish military as much breathing and attacking space as possible: on 22 July, he telephoned Callaghan at 5:00 p.m. (GMT), only nine hours before Sampson resigned, to say that the Americans did not want Sampson as the final outcome, but that before they turned on him they wanted to see what the “general package looked

19. Washington to FCO, *op.cit.*, 17 July 1974, *telegram no. 2414*.

20. Washington to FCO, 20 July 1974 PRO FCO 9/1895, file WSC 1/10, part F, *telegram no. 2445*.

like”²¹. Even more blatantly, when Ramsbotham asked Kissinger on 23 July “how he saw the next moves”, the latter replied that he would like to procrastinate until he could see clearly how the forces were balanced. By this time, notwithstanding the differences of opinion on Makarios’ status, the British government was moving into tandem with Kissinger: Ramsbotham told Kissinger that the British government approach (to the impending conference in Geneva) was similar to the USA’s²². Even on the question of restoring Makarios to power, the British were not sticking to their guns, particularly since their High Commission in Nicosia had reported that the local repercussions of Makarios re-establishing himself in Cyprus as president “would be extremely dangerous”²³. This judgment had of course been made while Sampson and the National Guard were still in control. Nevertheless, the British appear to have been happy to hide behind the Americans.

French Irritation and Russian Games

France quite correctly suspected that the Anglo-Saxon alliance was in full swing. The French Foreign Minister, Sauvagnargues, told Callaghan on the eve of the Turkish invasion that the Americans had told them that their main objective was to avoid unilateral Turkish action and the possibility of giving the Russians a pretext to invade. The Americans, said Sauvagnargues, were against having a resolution in the Security Council asking for the withdrawal of the Greek officers, but, more to the point, Sauvagnargues told Callaghan that while the French felt that the Americans should exert strong pressure on the Greeks, *they were not sure that they were in fact doing so*. Pertinently, however, Sauvagnargues said that the French Embassy in London had had some difficulty in obtaining information from the FCO in the previous two days²⁴. This “detail” speaks volumes, adding weight to the title of O’Mal-

21. Acland, 22 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1897, file WSC 1/10, part A, *note for the record*.

22. Washington to FCO, 23 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1898, file WSC 1/11, part I, *telegram no. 2476*.

23. Nicosia to FCO, 17 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1892, file WSC 1/10, part C, *telegram 230*.

24. Callaghan and Sauvagnargues, 19 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1894, file WSC 1/10, part E, *record of conversation*.

ley and Craig's book, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*²⁵.

This suggests that the French had been duped by Kissinger: to tell them that the main objective was to stop the Turks acting unilaterally, while contriving to do exactly the opposite, was simply "double-track diplomacy" at best, or double-faced, at worst. As for the fear that the Soviet Union would invade Cyprus, this appears to have been more of an excuse than a genuine fear: Kissinger had already come to an agreement with Moscow. In fact, only two days earlier, Kissinger had told Rambotham that one need not worry about the possibility "of a movement by the Russians [sic] and the non-aligned in the Security Council to condemn the Greeks"²⁶. If Kissinger was equanimous about the mere threat of a condemnation, he is unlikely to have believed that the Soviet Union would come to the aid of Cyprus, unless they thought that Cyprus itself (as opposed to the British bases) would be forced into the "Western camp". The Soviets were against *enosis*, single or double, since that would have gone against their interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Kissinger had obviously reassured the Soviet Union, but may well have deceived it about the actual *extent* of Turkish territorial plans.

As a result of Kissinger's stalling tactics, the Turkish armed forces were able to continue their advance with impunity after the so-called ceasefire, agreed to take effect on 22 July. For the Turkish government, and Kissinger, the ceasefire was somewhat academic, and the Turkish attack even continued during the Anglo-Greek-Turkish talks in Geneva, from 25 to 30 July. On 25 July, the British High Commissioner in Nicosia, Oliver, was reporting about Turkish reinforcements, and the Turkish consolidation of various areas, adding (perhaps a touch naively, given Kissinger's position), that "the results of such flagrant violations could be politically very serious"²⁷. The US Ambassador in Athens, Tasca, was already "highly incensed at Turkish duplicity", describing Turkish conduct as "outrageous", particularly since the Turkish government had in--

25. Brendan O'Malley and Ian Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, I. B. Tauris, London and New York, 1999.

26. Washington to FCO, *op.cit.*, 17 July 1974, *telegram no. 2414*.

27. Nicosia to FCO, 25 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1900 WSC 1/10, part K, *telegram no. 416*.

ordinately delayed clearance for Sisco's flight to Ankara²⁸.

The temporary agreement signed in Geneva to "cease hostilities" appears to have been merely theoretical for the Turkish government: on 4 August, only four days before the next round of talks in Geneva, an angry Callaghan wrote to Ecevit:

I am increasingly disturbed by reports from several sources reaching me from Cyprus that villagers [Greek Cypriot] are being evicted from their houses in the Kyrenia area controlled by you and your armed forces and that their men are being held as hostages ... I can assure you that HMG and Her Majesty's Government will continue to exercise their influence to ensure that both communities are treated with humanity. Otherwise I fear that we shall get nowhere at the next round in Geneva²⁹.

Pressure on Greece, British Indignation and Further Stalling

As early as 20 July, following the Turkish invasion, Kissinger had told his Ambassador to tell the Greek government that if they carried out their threat to declare war on Turkey and declare *enosis*, the US would immediately cut off military aid³⁰. The most intense pressure, however, was applied on the new Karamanlis government, following the "second" Turkish invasion on the night of 14 August. In a curiously Kissingeresque message to Karamanlis, Callaghan stated:

The arrival of the Greek forces [in Cyprus], whatever their purpose, would increase the risk of further Turkish forces being sent to the island and of those already there moving yet further forward. It would almost certainly lead to murderous assaults on Greek Cypriots in the area now held by the Turkish armed forces. It would also raise the spectre of a disastrous extension of the fighting outside Cyprus, *with little*

28. Athens to FCO, 20 July 1974, PRO FCO 9/1895, file WSC 1/10, part F, *telegram no. 242*.

29. FCO to Ankara, 4 August 1974, PRO FCO 9/1907, file WSC 1/10, part R, *telegram no. 920*.

30. FCO to Washington, 20 July 1974, PRO FCO 1895, file WSC 1/10, part F, *telegram no. 153*.

*prospect of outside intervention to protect the interests of Greece [my italics]*³¹.

Diplomatically, this was a clear threat to Greece that if it went to the help of Cyprus, it would get no support, even if Greek territory was itself threatened. This, combined with the American threat to the previous Greek government, was tantamount to condoning Turkish aggression. It is little wonder that even today Greek governments, and especially the media, are suspicious of American (and British) policies vis-à-vis Cyprus.

The British did at least consider their military options, since they were fully aware of the duplicitous Turkish position at the Geneva talks. A Top Secret Ministry of Defence memorandum of 10 August to Callaghan stated:

The Turkish army is looking for an excuse to continue operations ... I have asked for an urgent assessment by the Chief of Staff of those forces which could be made available for reinforcement and the likely timescales but I believe that there could be no question of offering the extra 5,000 men postulated without reducing force levels in Northern Ireland and withdrawing units from BAOR [British Army of the Rhine]. The build-up would take, I would assess, up to a fortnight and I would not be surprised if the Chief of Staff would wish to include air defences in the face of the considerable threat from the Turkish Air Forces³².

Cyprus was neither Iraq nor the Falkland Islands

The same day, British defence officials in Geneva, in a Top Secret telegram to the FCO, reported that Callaghan was “most concerned at the hard line attitude being adopted by the Turkish delegation at Geneva and the strong indications that they would soon attempt a major break-out”. He continued:

31. FCO to Athens, 16 August 1974, PRO FCO 9/1911, file WSC 1/10, part V, *telegram no. 274*.

32. Mellersh to Secretary of State, 10 August 1974, PRO FCO 9/1915, file WSC 1/10, part Z, *memorandum*.

The [UNFICYP] force would have to be large enough and so armed as to give a good account of itself, but I have emphasized that deterrence is all we could hope for and that any question of holding the Turks is out of the question with the estimated Turkish force levels and in the face of Turkish air [sic] ... Foreign Secretary has asked that Phantoms be held at Akrotiri ... It would be most useful if I could have an idea of what reinforcements could be made available and in what time scale³³.

Notwithstanding all this backstage “contingency planning”, the “negotiations” continued in Geneva, culminating, as is well known, in the Turkish deadline and attack. Extraordinarily, Callaghan asked Kissinger to ask Ecevit how far south the Turks were planning to advance; Kissinger claimed that he was “unable to get through”, and that he had asked the US Ambassador of Ankara to ask on his behalf³⁴. Kissinger knew very well roughly how far south the Turks were planning to advance. At any event, the British government had clearly now finally succumbed to US policy, whatever its self-righteous indignation about Turkish behaviour.

More revealingly, at 11:30 (GMT) on the night of 14 August, when Callaghan asked Kissinger whether he would be prepared to attend a NATO ministerial meeting if he called one, Kissinger agreed “as long as it was not held before Monday 19 August”³⁵.

This blatant delaying tactic on Kissinger’s part reveals above all how desperate he was to give the Turkish government as much time as possible to achieve its objectives. Britain was now toeing the US line, albeit having to swallow any pride it might still have. Callaghan was not even prepared to meet Karamanlis “before he (Karamanlis) had talked to the Americans³⁶. Britain was now clearly playing second fiddle to the US as regards Cyprus. To illustrate this more clearly, the following report

33. *Ibid.*, Geneva to FCO, 10 August 1974, *telegram no. 806*.

34. FCO to Ankara, 15 August 1974, PRO FCO 9/1910, file WSC 1/10, part U, *telegram no. 975*.

35. FCO record, 14 and 15 August 1974, PRO FCO 9/1909, file WSC 1/10, part T, *diary*.

36. FCO to Washington, 15 August 1974, PRO FCO 9/1910, file WSC 1/10, part U, *telegram no. 1709*.

of (yet another) telephone conversation, on 15 August, between Kissinger and Callaghan, reveals Kissinger's studiously and expediently dilatory approach:

... I [Callaghan] expressed my concern about Turkey's intentions in the rest of the Aegean ... Had the Americans thought what they would do in the event of Turkey trying to capitalize outside Cyprus ... Kissinger said he would crack down on the Turks in those circumstances. I told him that I was not sure that we could wait until the Turks acted. If for instance they created a situation where the *de facto* position of the island resulted in *enosis*, whether double or otherwise, the consequences could only be unfortunate. An alliance between Makarios and Papandreou would result in a neutralist government in Greece. *Kissinger said that he would ask his staff to do a study of the issues I had raised [my italics]*³⁷.

The Day After

Kissinger and Ecevit are well known to have said fairly recently that the Cyprus problem was solved in 1974. Given the confused, dangerous and unjust situation that exists today, it is unlikely that any levelheaded and moderate observer would agree with Kissinger and Ecevit (a former pupil of Kissinger)³⁸. Before we conclude this brief account, it is worth looking at some of the documents written after the Turks had consolidated their illegal occupation. The first point to emerge was Kissinger's continuing —but failed— attempts to keep Makarios out of the picture. At a lunch on 10 September, Kissinger told Edward Heath, the British Conservative opposition leader, that Archbishop Makarios was unlikely ever to be acceptable again in Cyprus; “it was the fear that he might have sought Soviet support in addition to their own which had restrained the Americans from backing him more clearly in the first day of the crisis”³⁹.

37. *Ibid.*, FCO to Washington, *telegram no. 1713*.

38. Brendan O' Malley and Ian Craig, *op.cit.*

39. Kissinger and Heath, 10 September 1974, PRO FCO 9/1947, file WSC 3/304/2, *record of meeting (at lunch)*.

By mid-November, Kissinger had given up trying to prevent Makarios' return. Not long before the latter's return, he wrote in a second letter to Callaghan:

It is clear that Makarios is not in touch with the realities of the situation on the island and I am not sure that there is very much that we can do at this stage to open his eyes. As you indicate, Makarios will be consulting Caramanlis and Clerides in Athens after the Greek elections. We are told that Caramanlis is opposed to Makarios' return ... I am not sure that Caramanlis will be in a position to prevent Makarios' return ... Hopefully, Makarios can be convinced of the new realities on the island and the need not to compromise the fragile but essential Clerides-Denktaş negotiations⁴⁰.

Apart from the arrogant assumption that Makarios —of all people— was not in touch with the realities on the island, the negotiations were themselves little more than window-dressing. The British High Commissioner in Nicosia, reported in November:

I understand that matters may be reaching a stage where Clerides feels he must challenge Denktaş's status as *interlocuteur valable* in view of his invariable habit of referring proposals to the Turkish govt./military and the almost total lack of response so far⁴¹.

Then, as now, it is obvious that the illegally occupied part of Cyprus had no independence vis-à-vis Ankara, and could only take any initiative with the permission of the Turkish government. As for the continued Turkish contention that they invaded to protect Turkish Cypriots, it is significant that after the invasion, *Denktaş admitted to the British High Commissioner that there was no provocation of the Turkish Cypriot Community by the Greek Cypriots during the coup*. The only Turkish Cypriot casualties that the British were aware of during the duration of the coup were "one killed and two or three wounded by stray shots in the Kaimakli area, a highly confused northern suburb of Kyrenia, which

40. Kissinger to Callaghan, 16 November 1974, PRO FCO 9/1948, file WSC 3/304/2, part B, *letter*.

41. Nicosia to FCO, 21 November 1974, PRO FCO 9/1931, file WSC 1/19, *telegram no. 1304*.

was the centre of some fierce inter-factional exchanges during the coup⁴².

As for Kissinger, he continued to maintain a keen interest in Turkey, as well as Cyprus. On 19 December, he wrote to Callaghan:

I found Congressional feeling running strongly against a resumption of military assistance to Turkey. We [who, exactly?] have however succeeded in reaching an agreement with key members of Congress which will permit us to resume and continue military shipments to Turkey at least until February 5. This will permit a contact between Clerides and Denktash ...⁴³.

Here we see further evidence of the collusion between Kissinger and the Turkish government, and evidence that the latter was cynically using the issue of arms supplies as a bargaining chip in the “negotiations” between Clerides and Denktash. Here, too, further seeds were being planted for the future “Annan” plan. Britain, the US and Kissinger were all pushing for a “bi-regional federation”, an idea which would “disappoint Karamanlis”⁴⁴.

Bi-regional federation or not, Britain’s essential obsession was of course with the territory that it had taken from Cyprus in 1960, the Sovereign Base Areas. A meeting at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office well before the invasion had already referred to Graeco-Turkish collusion as a threat to the long-term viability of the bases⁴⁵. Just one month after the Turkish invasion, British doubts about their bases seem to have been far deeper: a brief for the Foreign Secretary’s meeting with Kissinger stated:

If Dr. Kissinger raises it [the subject of British tenure of the Sovereign Base Areas], he intends to be guarded. If necessary, he could say that, during the recent crisis, our presence in the Sovereign Base Areas proved on balance to be an em-

42. Perceval (Nicosia) to Weston (FCO), 25 September 1974, PRO FCO 9/1913, file WSC 1/10, part Y, *letter*.

43. Kissinger to Callaghan (via Spiers of US Embassy, London), 19 November 1974, PRO FCO 9/1948, file WSC 3/304/2, part B, *letter*.

44. FCO to Washington, 19 November 1974, PRO FCO 9/1929, file WSC 1/16, part C, *telegram no. 2366*.

45. *Meeting to review Anglo-Greek relations*, 6 September 1973, PRO FCO 9/1527, file WSG3/548/3.

barrassment to us. If pressed to say what conclusions he draws from this, he could say that the future of the Bases will probably be discussed in the context of the Defence Review, but that action on this has of course been suspended until after the election. As Dr. Kissinger knows, we shall wish to talk to the Americans about plans on a worldwide basis before we talk to anyone else⁴⁶.

Before concluding, a final mention of the French connexion is relevant here, in that the US and Britain were still worried about the future direction a Greek government might take, especially in terms of arms sales, always a major factor to consider in international relations, especially since Eisenhower's warning in 1961 about the unwarranted influence of the "military-industrial complex". The British Embassy wrote in October:

In some groups, notably the middle rank followers of the junta, views on external relations seem to have become so anti-American and anti-western as to overlay fear of Communism. The Cyprus crisis can only have seemed to swell the numbers of those who so consider that Greece can stand alone —perhaps with France as arms supplier⁴⁷.

Conclusions

The tale of British-American diplomacy vis-à-vis the Cyprus crisis of 1974 is certainly a sorry one, depicting, as it does, not only the duplicity and hidden agendas of Kissinger and Ecevit, but also an American nail in the coffin of the independence of British foreign policy, a coffin that is very much in evidence today. Even back in 1974, Britain's disinclination to work with the French was much in evidence. Not only did the FCO refuse to let the French know what was happening at crucial moments (Britain was still smarting from the setting up a French "broadcasting station" in Cyprus)⁴⁸, but worked essentially with the

46. *Steering Brief* for Secretary of State's discussions with Dr. Kissinger in New York, 24 September 1974, PRO FCO 82/446, file AMU3/548/8, part B.

47. Richards (Athens) to Killick (FCO), 9 September 1974, PRO FCO 9/1946, file WSC 3/303/1, *letter*.

48. Kilburn, 14 December 1970, PRO FCO 9/1160, file WSC 3/312/1, *minutes of meeting at Ministry of Defence*.

Americans, who had no legal *locus standi* vis-à-vis Cyprus. Despite previous US anger at Britain's refusal to send troops to Vietnam, the US got their *quid pro quo* when the British government leased Diego Garcia to the US for fifty years, giving in to the American insistence that Britain expel its own subjects from the island as part of the deal. (This contrasts vividly with Britain's enormous military investment in "saving" the Falkland islanders a few years later). Like Diego Garcia, Cyprus was—and is—for the British and Americans simply a military strongpoint. The Greek Cypriots were merely "collateral damage". Despite the British government's private admission that joint action was called for when the "Sampson coup" took place, Britain preferred to hide behind the US at the end of the day, whatever its indignation.

One ingredient missing from the crisis was of course the "Grivas factor". It is indeed speculation, but it is nevertheless possible that the wily general would have been more circumspect had he still been around; but he had died in January 1974, rather unexpectedly, given the British High Commissioner's report only one month earlier, that the Cypriot doctors with whom he had discussed Grivas' physical and mental condition were inclined to believe that he was genuinely suffering from cancer of the prostate, but that apparently this was not a disease which necessarily made rapid progress. In fact, they said that Grivas could have a good two years of activity yet⁴⁹. Clearly, predicting is a tricky business: in January 1974, the High Commissioner wrote: "... I should expect Cyprus at the end of 1974 to be much the same sunny, Western-inclined island that she is now"⁵⁰.

A final comment can be made regarding the US's attitude towards the Greek government (s) during the crisis. At the beginning, Kissinger did everything possible *not* to put pressure on the Greek government to withdraw the Greek officers from the Cypriot National Guard. His motive was clearly to add fuel to the Turkish government's rationale that it must invade. Then, when the Turks had landed, Kissinger, in an amazing transmogrification, pulled out all the stops to prevent the Greek government from acting against the invasion.

49. Olver (Nicosia) to Goodison (FCO), 5 December 1973, PRO FCO 9/1970, file WSC 1/5, *letter*.

50. Olver to Secretary of State, 3 January 1974, PRO FCO 9/1883, file WSC 1/1, *Cyprus: Annual Review for 1973, para. 13*.

The Control of Information

As of 1 January 2005, Britain now has a “Freedom of Information Act”. Given this author’s failed attempts to see vital documents, it would be better to speak of a “Control of Information Act”. A selection of files still unavailable include the following descriptions: *Use of Sovereign Base Areas; British Military Training in Cyprus; Attitude of US towards Intercommunal Dispute; Negotiations with United Kingdom about defence lands involving Golden Sands and other development schemes; the King’s position; UK general policy towards Grivas; Income Tax paid by Turkish Cypriots employed by UK authorities in Cyprus; and First Geneva Conference Tripartite talks between UK, Greece and Turkey, 25-30 July 1974 (Part A)*. On top of this, where files have been released, various folios have been extracted, particularly from files about the “Sampson coup” and the Geneva negotiations.

I wrote on 9 February 2005 to the Orwellian-sounding “Information Management Group” (once called Library and Records Department) to ask to see various files under the Freedom of Information Act. The Group’s reply of 10 March stated:

We believe the release of information in these folios would be likely to harm our relations with both Cyprus and the United States and that the public interest in maintaining good relations with these countries outweighs the public interest in disclosing it ... If you are unhappy with the handling of this request, you may ask for an internal review. If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner⁵¹.

My reply of 24 April stated that withholding the documents only increased the degree of ignorance and suspicion in certain quarters, which could in turn lead to misunderstanding, hostility and a lack of balance in historical analysis, and even to the distortion of history. Despite a friendly telephone call and a facsimile sent on 4 July, I have yet (22 July 2005) to be informed about the outcome of the review.

One reason for this reticence seems to be that current political con-

51. Penny Prior to William Mallinson, 9 February 2005, *letter*.

siderations dictate what can and cannot be released. This represents a sorry state of affairs for serious researchers interested in policy formulation. It is little wonder that in the teaching of international relations, students and professors often have little to go on but jejune bromides.