

Chapter for reference book *Flag, Identity, Memory: Critiquing the Public Narrative through Color*

National identity and the Politics of Belonging in Greek Cypriot Visual Culture

Maria Photiou, University of Derby, University Research and Knowledge Exchange Office, Derby, United Kingdom, M.Photiou@derby.ac.uk

Abstract

For decades the display of blue and white colours in Cyprus have been synonymous with Greek nationalism. During British colonial rule in Cyprus, there was a rise of nationalism. As a result, the Greek population of Cyprus demanded Enosis (union) with Greece. The rise of Greek nationalism during the National Liberation Struggle 1955-59 was, for the most part, denoted through a national 'spectacle' that included the national anthem and the flag. According to Rebecca Bryant (2004: 164), 'anything which bore the blue and white colors of Greece [...] could be constructed as symbolic of Greek nationalism'.

This chapter investigates the visual representation of Greek flags and the way images convey nationalism in Cyprus. It focuses on the work of Greek Cypriot artists Takis Frangoudes and George Georgiou, who both employed visual strategies to expose historical and socio-political events in Cyprus. It will explore how the usage of 'national spectacles' represented the political events during the anti-colonial struggle. It will also examine how the usage of the blue and white colours of the Greek flag constructs a sense of collective and political belonging during the long and violent history of Cyprus.

Introduction

Cyprus's size and strategic geographical location has been the reason for the island's continual invasion and occupation by foreign rulers. Cyprus's last two rulers were the Ottoman Empire, from 1570 to 1878, and the British Empire, from 1878 to 1960. Cyprus was granted formal independence in 1960 after EOKA's (Greek for National Organisation of Cypriot Struggle) national struggle. The island's long history of invasions and oppression by bigger, more powerful states has resulted in immense confusion about national identity and social structure. As Myria Vassiliadou points out, Cyprus is a place full of contradictions:

It is at the crossroads of Africa, Asia, and Europe and it is the cultural blend of all three continents. It is also influenced by Greece and the Hellenic civilisation, Turkey and Anatolia, Britain and colonialism/imperialism, Islam and Orthodoxy; and, by all the invaders of the last five million years. [...] This uniqueness expresses itself in an extraordinary blend of the 'East' with the 'West', an internalisation of opposing values, contradicting moralities, and a complex perception of the people's identity and culture.¹

According to the 1960 constitution, Cyprus was composed by two communities: the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot. The Greek Cypriot community comprises citizens who are of Cypriot origin, have Greek as their mother tongue, share Greek culture, or belong to the Greek Orthodox religion. Likewise, the Turkish Cypriot community comprises citizens who are of Cypriot origin and have Turkish as their mother tongue, or who share Turkish culture and are Muslims.

During the British colonial rule (1878-1960), Greek Cypriots demanded Enosis (union with Greece) while Turkish Cypriots favoured the island's partition. The Greek Cypriot community's cultural, historical and socio-political affiliation with the Greek civilisation was supported by the educational system and Orthodox religion. This was evolved into a nationalistic practice during the anti-colonial struggle that included the celebration of Greek Independence Day, depictions of Greek personalities and heroes/heroine, and the display of Greek flags. Up until the 1970s the national flag of Greece consisted of a white cross on a blue field.² The flag itself is highly symbolic as the cross represents Orthodox religion and its strong interrelationship to the nation. The colours white and

¹ Vassiliadou (1999), p. 5.

² The new national flag has been used since 1978.

blue have been associated as representations of the Greek sky and the Mediterranean Sea.

This chapter investigates the visual representation of Greek flag and the way images convey national identity and the politics of belonging in Cyprus.³ It focuses on the work of Greek Cypriot artists Takis Frangoudes and George Georgiou, who both employed visual strategies to expose historical and socio-political events in Cyprus. It will explore how the usage of 'national spectacles' represents the political events during the anti-colonial struggle. It will also examine how the usage of the blue and white colours of the Greek flag constructs a sense of collective and political belonging during the long and violent history of Cyprus.

³ This chapter is based on research I carried out for my doctoral thesis at Loughborough University entitled *Rethinking the History of Cypriot Art: Greek Cypriot Women Artists in Cyprus* at Loughborough University, UK.

Demonstrations as Visual Representation of National Belonging

The 1950s were marked by the rise of Greek nationalism and the emergence of the anti-colonial struggle in Cyprus. Politics, art and society were all linked to the collective action of Enosis. In fact, Enosis introduced a modern social interaction where Greek Cypriot people committed themselves to supporting the national liberation struggle. EOKA was seen, according to Stavros Panteli, as 'a chance to fight not only for national freedom but for social justice. Although EOKA was almost entirely a right-wing nationalist-led movement it had a proletarian base because it was seen to be carrying on an anti-imperialistic struggle.'⁴ EOKA held together the struggle for national self-determination and Enosis with Greece. During the 1950s, EOKA was 'able to wage a fierce armed struggle against overwhelming odds only because of the mass support it received from the Greek Cypriot people.'⁵ Consequently, the pursuit of Cyprus' liberty established a common ground that proved to be crucial for the struggle's endurance. In the name of Enosis, Cypriot fighters commenced their anti-colonial struggle and gave Cypriots the impetus to strike, to hold assemblies, to demonstrate and to sabotage.

Student Demonstration during the Liberation Struggle, was created in 1956 by the Greek Cypriot artist Takis Frangoudes (1901-1978). The work features a crowd of figures painted with strong elements of Cubism and with simplified brush lines in oil colours of blue, white and brown. The image is constructed through a visual code of Enosis incorporated in the representation of a mass of students that dominates the composition. Students are represented as especially active, all positioned in battle poses while holding stones, bottles, and flags. One student is holding the slogan 'Long Live Enosis'.

I propose that Frangoudes deliberately represents students as abstract geometrical figures without facial characteristics in order to construct his demonstration as an un-gendered one. What is particularly significant here is his employment of colour: shades of blue and white cover virtually everything, from students' school uniforms to the background's abstract composition. When the painting is looked at carefully, it is clear that the students' juxtaposition forms a massive Greek flag: students are aligned so that those dressed in white shirts form the cross, whereas the ones with blue shirts outline the flag as a whole.

The collective action of EOKA, which Frangoudes' work connotes, was in large part adopted by students in the name of Enosis. That Enosis evolved into a highly politicised concept challenging social-political happenings is a

⁴ Panteli (2000), p. 230.

⁵ Ibid.

fact that embodied Cyprus' social awakening during colonialism. In the image there is no element of British presence. However, it is quite obvious that the British are the factor that students are acting against – the British are the 'other', that which the students' demonstrations aim to overthrow in order to achieve Enosis. In Frangoudes' demonstration the mass manifestation is represented at its peak, at the specific stage of collision between students and the British colonial force, accounting for students' commitment to sustain Enosis.

It is not surprising that students formed the core of EOKA's anti-colonial demonstrations. Soon after Cyprus' request to the United Nations for a referendum about Enosis in 1954, students were the first to spontaneously demonstrate.⁶ While students' parents were reluctant to join the struggle, the students themselves were effectively 'organised en masse' by their teachers and priests, who 'had worked closely for years to prepare the groundwork for such an uprising'.⁷ In fact, Greek Cypriot schools played the most significant role in the formation of 'young patriots', who, through their 'moral discipline', had the 'willingness to sacrifice and obey' and formed the 'most powerful weapon in the hands of EOKA'.⁸

Unlike other decolonizing countries⁹, Cyprus did not suffer from any extreme social-economic problems that could be used as a reason to revolt against British rule.¹⁰ The idea of Enosis was based on a 'romantic idealism' that developed the 'cliché that it is better to be poor with Mother Greece than rich with Stepmother England'.¹¹ Hence, the EOKA leader, Colonel Grivas, ingeniously called upon students who 'were most prone to take risks and join a struggle for purely patriotic and ideological reasons'.¹² It is not surprising that Grivas called on young people in the struggle, since he had experienced the loyalty of a youth movement during the Greek occupation in the Second World War and the civil war in Greece.¹³ Greek Cypriot school kids strongly supported Enosis and they staged their own demonstrations on a number of occasions. Photographs from the time show kids in their school uniforms marching through the streets with the Greek flag.¹⁴

For Grivas, the use of 'passionate youth' was of prime importance:

⁶ Foley (1962), p. 29.

⁷ Bryant (1998), p. 54.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Algeria, Russia and Cuba, for example.

¹⁰ Markides (1977), p. 17.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dighenis, and Foley (1964), p. 28.

¹⁴ A photograph of the time can be found at

<https://www.histclo.com/country/other/cyp/hist/ch-eno.html>

It is among the young people that one finds audacity, the love of taking risks and the thirst for great and difficult achievements. It was to the young of Cyprus that I made my main appeal and called on to give their all to the struggle [...] I assigned young people the task of forming groups of saboteurs, the manufacture of explosives, and the supervision and execution of orders concerning passive resistance [...] Schoolboys between the ages of fourteen and seventeen undertook dangerous missions such as the blowing up of aircraft at the British air bases, the laying of mines and the blowing up of police stations.¹⁵

However, Frangoudes' image does not simply illustrate the 'legend' of Enosis. I argue that the work itself is a political construction questioning the national identity of Cyprus. Clearly, the work speaks of a national identity based on a collective Greek spirit caged by imperialism and its disciplined rules. As Bryant explains, students 'were trained to fight for an ideal: not simply an ideal of justice, or for freedom, or for a better life, but an ideal of *enosis*, which encompassed all of these'.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, students were among the main activists who changed the political situation in Cyprus. EOKA's first major demonstration took place on 24 May 1955, when some seven hundred students launched a hail of stones at the British soldiers. As Grivas notes in his memoirs:

After that, nothing could hold the schools back. They learned to act as one in blind obedience to my orders and develop into one of the chief factors in our victory. The British were baffled to find that the enemy throwing bombs was a sixteen-year-old schoolboy, or that those distributing revolutionary leaflets were ten-year-olds from the primary schools.¹⁷

Throughout the struggle hundreds of students demonstrated against the British and, on many occasions, participated in dangerous missions. During the last two years of EOKA's struggle (1958-59), the periodical 'I Agoge ton Neon' (translated as 'The Training of the Young') was published for a readership of elementary school students. In one of its articles, titled 'We will acquire our freedom', the anonymous journalist refers to the history of Hellenism:

¹⁵ Dighenis (1964), pp. 14-15.

¹⁶ Bryant, Rebecca (1998), p. 54.

¹⁷ Dighenis and Foley (1964), p. 35.

Do you understand what [history] will say after so many raids, so many conquests, so many vicissitudes will not ease us from the face of the earth, as have been so many other peoples, but we will continue to exist as Greeks, to speak the same language that our great forefathers spoke?¹⁸

EOKA has been described by some former members as not '[...] simply a struggle born of the insults, condescension and mismanagement of the British, but [...] a struggle rooted in a past which made their victory inevitable'.¹⁹ This was apparent to the British on their arrival, when Greek Cypriots welcomed the new rule in the hope that it would soon lead to Enosis, as had been the case with the Ionian Islands. In contrast, however, the British not only ignored the Cypriots' demands but endeavoured to 'de-Hellenize' the Cypriots through a number of methods:

The prohibition of Greek maps which included Cyprus; pictures of the Greek royal family or other Greek personalities; the teaching of the Greek national anthem; the celebration of Greek independence day; the use of the Greek flag; and the use generally of anything which bore the blue and white colours of Greece and could be construed as symbolic of Greek nationalism.²⁰

Throughout the struggle 30,000 British soldiers were assigned to combat EOKA and had attempted to 'de-Hellenize' the Greek Cypriots:

[...] many schools were closed because of the 'illegal' activities of the students, such as the raising of the Greek flag. When police and military measures failed to extinguish the sentiments and sympathies of the people for enosis, many teachers, students and other citizens were imprisoned or were detained in barbed-wire-surrounded camps without trials.²¹

For this reason, English was introduced in Greek schools, despite objections from both Church and Greek Cypriot leaders. It is interesting to compare this with the experience of other colonies, which, 'absorbed, subverted, and reinvented the cultures of the colonizers in order to use them as weapons'.²² In contrast, Greek Cypriots accepted this only after English-language

¹⁸ Bryant (2004), p. 160.

¹⁹ Bryant (1998), p. 55.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 57.

²¹ Spyridakis (1974), p. 176.

²² Bryant (1998), p. 62.

knowledge proved to be an economic necessity.²³ However, during their demonstrations, students boosted the national spirit with their persistent raising of Greek flags while shouting nationalist statements such as 'Long Live Enosis' and 'Greece-Cyprus-Enosis'. In addition to the Enosis demonstrations, students burned their English textbooks in order to demonstrate their patriotic detestation of the colonial rule.²⁴ Many of the students later became members of EOKA; although they were labelled as 'terrorists' and cited in the wanted list, their only aspiration was to live in a liberated country, something that became possible through the struggle.

Frangoudes' *Student Demonstration* emphasises the widespread national force of the struggle. The painting imposes its connection to national identity through the dynamic uses of colour and its shades of blue and white, which resemble the Greek flag. The rise of Greek nationalism was for the most part denoted through a national 'spectacle' and the use of national fetish symbols. Anne McClintock points out that nationalism takes shape 'through the visible, ritual organisation of fetishes objects – flags, uniforms [...] anthems [...] as well as through the organisation of collective fetish spectacle – in team sports, military displays, mass rallies, the myriad forms of popular culture and so on'.²⁵

Such fetish objects within the artistic framework serve to convey the Greek nationalism of Cyprus. References to Greek flags in artworks evoke the national character and/or reveal the conflict over the flags, given that the flying of the Greek flags was strictly forbidden. This serves to mock the absurd rules imposed by the British. Petra Theodotou suggests four more national 'fetishised' objects: EOKA's leaflets, stones, hearts and blood.²⁶ The first two symbolise the articulate force of Enosis; the other two connote 'notions of the purity of blood, [a] quasi-religious sacrifice and a nationalist "blood and soil" mentality is also salient'. Looking closer at the *Student Demonstration during the Liberation Struggle*, we see two such objects in the hands of students: stones and bottles. The power of Enosis is embodied in the students' possession of Greek flags and panels with the inscription 'Long Live Enosis'. At this point I propose that the use of 'anti-fetishised' objects play a crucial part in the consideration of the conflict and Greek nationalism in Cyprus. Such objects, imposed by the British, include penalties (curfews, concentration camps and fines), masquerades (hooded informers working for the British) and the gallows. I suggest that all these objects together augmented anti-colonial sentiment and Cypriots' faith in Enosis.

²³ Persianis (1978), p. 167.

²⁴ Bryant (1998), p. 62.

²⁵ McClintock (1996), p. 274.

²⁶ Theodotou-Tournay (2006), p. 377.

Frangoudes constructed in his image a powerful political visual assemblage against British rule. He employs emotive visual language in order to convey the atmosphere of the conflict. He represents the national identity and sense of belonging with nationalist symbols and the colours of the Greek flag. *Student Demonstration during the Liberation Struggle* narrates Cyprus' collective memory during a key socio-political time. Having discussed the importance of visual representation of the Greek flag in relation to national identity and sense of belonging in Cyprus, I will explore in the following discussion how the national loss is represented after the British restoration of law and order in Cyprus.

Cypria Saga

EOKA's struggle was described by Elenitza Seraphim Loizou, the first woman area commander in EOKA, as the 'reckoning between Cyprus and the mighty British Empire, a veritable David and Goliath conflict'.²⁷ At the peak of the conflict, the British armed forces' presence in Cyprus was numbered at about 30,000 troops, whereas there were only 300 members of EOKA.

George Pol. Georgiou (1901-1972) was a self-taught artist who studied law in London and was politically engaged throughout the struggle period. Georgiou produced a series of works featuring the upheaval in Cyprus during the anti-colonial struggle. *Cypria Saga* (1956), Georgiou's first image related to the struggle, stands as a historical narration of the dramatic period, entangled with moments of heroism and betrayals.

The work is constructed through several scenes that together form references to historical events which marked the 1950s period. The image is divided in two, with its central axis being the elongated figure of a monk. Georgiou employs symbolic metaphors to create a visual representation of the conditions of the struggle's first year. One such metaphor is the oversized representation of British soldiers on the right side of the painting, particularly their oversized hands and boots, with one boot stepping on a leaflet. On the left-hand side, two British soldiers are dragging a student; a Greek Cypriot fighter, with open hands and whose back faces the viewer, covers the upper left side of the work. Alongside the fighter is an image of the graves of EOKA's young dead, buried at the Central Prisons of Nicosia. Despite the emotive scenes, Georgiou employs neutral colours of blue, white and brown to emphasise the symbolic representation of the work. Greek flags are depicted in various places throughout the image.

The symbolic interpretation of the struggle in *Cypria Saga* has been compared by the British journalist George Clay to Picasso's *Guernica*, Goya's *Disasters of War* and the Hiroshima panels of Iri Maruki and Toshiko Akamatsu.²⁸ Clay's article 'Passion and Patriotism: Cyprus – A Study in Human Ordeal' reveals that despite the general perception of Cypriots as 'terrorists', a significant number of people around the world – and especially in England – supported the Cypriot struggle. As Clay affirms in his analysis of *Cypria Saga*, the British administration was, for a long time, violating Cypriot human rights:

The foot of one of the soldiers on the right stumbles awkwardly on 'The Voice of Cyprus', but from his clumsy boot three strands

²⁷ Loizou-Seraphim (1999), p. 22.

²⁸ Clay (1958), p. 7.

of barbed wire stretch across to the Charter of Human Rights for which the symbolic figure at the top left has fallen in the unending struggle for redemption.²⁹

In *Cypria Saga* Georgiou illustrates the chaotic period through the construction of several narrative scenes. Georgiou employs, as the central figure of the composition, a 'petrified monk' standing in front of Byzantine church domes, suggesting 'a symbol of the faith of the Cypriot people fossilised with time to a rock-like endurance'.³⁰ The centralised location of the monk embodies the vital role of the Greek Orthodox Church throughout the struggle and its patronage of Enosis. As Georgiou states:

Through all the dark years of political bondage the Greek Cypriots kept their faith in the Autocephalous (the Independent Cyprus Church) for their redemption. But their murmurs of protest were lost in the clamour of imperialism until teenage raise its flag at the foot of the Autocephalous and Dighenis (symbolised as a masked peasant riding on a donkey) was reincarnated to call Cyprus to arms.³¹

Enosis is portrayed in every single element of Georgiou's panorama. A flaming village oven symbolically depicts EOKA'S kernel. EOKA's members are represented by black masks, which are formed from the oven. You can see numerous masks scattered around the painting. The upper left part of the composition is covered by a young fighter embracing a lower scene that consists of circulated leaflets and the arrest of a student by the British forces. A similar scene dominates the right section of the scenery. Adjacent is the donkey driven by Dighenis, which functions as a reminder of the humorous episode in which a donkey bearing the sign 'I surrender' was allowed to wander the streets as EOKA's reply to the British proposal for fighters to surrender.³²

The two gigantic figures of the British soldiers dragging the student to a concentration camp symbolise the 'imperial bondage' and reinforce *Cypria Saga* as a symbolic representation of the Cyprus drama through the visual employment of people's identities: the mysterious appearance of the messenger with the envelope in his/her outstretched hand, the priest reading a newspaper next to anti-British slogans, a schoolboy reading a 'Reward' poster and the presence of mute women as a symbol of 'Cypriot

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Panteli (2005), p. 195.

motherhood'.³³ I consider that in *Cypria Saga*, the power of Enosis is signified by the dynamic action of national representations; student demonstrations, distribution of pamphlets, curfews, arrests, detention camps, torture chambers and the most vengeful of all punishments, the death sentence.

The first death sentence set British-Cypriot relations on a path of even greater confrontation. Cypriots had to face the new British attitude, which had little in common with the typical idea of the Englishman as 'the quixotic and fearless defender of right, the just and freedom-loving Englishman'.³⁴ The solid familiar status of British indifference was soon replaced by political violence, which became a fact of daily life. Stavros Panteli described British restoration of law and order in Cyprus as thus:

In Britain there was much distress at the strained relations with a country that had been its ally and friend. By permitting Harding to set up what was tantamount to a military dictatorship (reminiscent of Palmer's in the 1930s), and indulge in the jailing and whipping of schoolboys (a practice more associated with Hitler, Mussolini and Franco and one not approved by the British public), to impose collective fines on villages (after the manner of Nazi collective punishments), to carry out mass detentions and round up villagers behind barbed wire as though they were prisoners of war or criminals, the British had so deeply offended and embittered the kindly Greek Cypriots that [...] the goodwill of the local inhabitants, had been practically destroyed.³⁵

It is interesting that despite the British government's emergency measures, the British public was sympathetic towards Cypriot people and the national struggle: in a 1956 article, *Time Magazine* wrote: '[...] but what made it heartbreaking is the fact that [it] is a fight between friends. Greeks have fought beside Britons for freedom since Byron; they cannot understand now why the British should deny their fellow Greeks' desire for self-determination'.³⁶

Michalis Karaolis (1933-1956) was the first to be sentenced to death and hanged in 1956. The British proclamation of such a sentence and their refusal to give Karaolis' corpse to his family severed the bond between Greek Cypriots and the British. At the time, demonstrations against British rule were the subject of great debate among foreigners. Visual Enosis material was

³³ Clay (1958), p. 8.

³⁴ Durrell (1957), p. 260.

³⁵ Panteli (2000), p. 245.

³⁶ Article, No author, (21st May 1956), 'Cyprus: Deepening Tragedy', *Time Magazine U.S.*, available from:

<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,808483,00.html> > 28 June 2019.

published around the world, provoking opposing reactions of sympathy and hostility. While some had emphasised the armed conflict and perceived the struggle as being undertaken by 'criminals' and 'terrorists', others saw in Enosis the aspiration for freedom that many previously colonised countries had fought to conquer. Among the supporters was the French philosopher Albert Camus, who requested clemency for Michael Karaolis. Camus's appeal was among the first cases of foreign sympathy and revealed Europe's awareness of Cyprus' struggle for self-determination.

Cyprus' conflict was reminiscent of the occurrences that took place forty years earlier in another island under the British Empire: the Irish War of Independence. Helen O' Shea discusses in her (2009) PhD thesis, *The Irish Interaction with Empire: British Cyprus and the EOKA Insurgency, 1955-59*, some striking similarities between the two colonised countries and their conflicts with the British. O' Shea explains the parallels between the first two martyred heroes of EOKA and the IRA (Irish Republican Army). According to O'Shea, both Karaolis and Kevin Barry were 'young idealists, keen sportsmen, and neither belonged to what could be called the fringe of extremism'.³⁷ The British practiced similar policies in both countries, despite the conflicts occurring in different eras. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Irish people felt sympathy for Cypriots and supported their 'compatriots' through numerous resolutions. In June 1956, the *Dublin Opinion* published a sympathetic image of two women, each representing Ireland and England, standing next to each other with the following caption: 'as one woman to another, I think you're making the same mistake with Cyprus that you made with me'.³⁸

Cyprus' demand for self-determination, and the despotic British policy, had stimulated Cypriot nationalists who warned that they would 'answer hanging with hanging and torture with torture'.³⁹ The same magazine equated the 1956 events with the earlier experience of Ireland: 'In 1916 we shot the leaders of the Easter Rebellion. By 1921 more Irishmen than ever were fighting us in the name of Pearse and Connolly, and the resentment which our action aroused had not died away'.⁴⁰ Likewise, the British policy of curfews, torture chambers and brutal executions reinforced Greek Cypriot loyalty toward Enosis.

³⁷ O'Shea (2009), p. 87.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

³⁹ Article, available from:

<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,808483,00.html> > 28 June 2019.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

In *For Ever* (1957), Georgiou represents the immolation of Grigoris Afxentiou (1928-1957), second in command in EOKA and, at the time, top of the British's list of most wanted men. The image is stylistically and thematically very similar to *Cypria Saga*: it is constructed by a series of scenes that together narrate the 1957 event. A large part of the composition is occupied by a black and white church, with Greek flags and the figures of three women presented in blue dresses with black scarves around their heads next to it. In the central scene we see the moment in which three EOKA fighters have surrendered while dozens of British soldiers aligned in several views of the image approach the flaming scene. As in his other anti-colonial visuals, Georgiou represents at the centre of the image graves of EOKA fighters and a leaflet in oversized form. Both elements are being stepped on by British soldiers. On the left side is depicted – on a much smaller scale – a seated priest surrounded by Greek Cypriot people. The whole imagery is situated outdoors, and we can see in the background some mountains and a distant church.

I suggest that Georgiou's visual symbolises the public's perception of the struggle: as previously mentioned, it was a 'veritable David and Goliath conflict'. Georgiou's image embodies the brutal British strategies against guerrilla fighters. The centric axis of the image is the blazing hideout in which Afxentiou was burned alive after an eight-hour resistance. Dominating the visual is the image of British soldiers, who hesitate at the entrance of the hideout, lacking the boldness to enter. At the centre is the image of Afxentiou's comrades, who had surrendered on his order. Afxentiou remained in the hideout, choosing to fight and die in a one-sided battle. His unexpected resistance confused the 60 British soldiers present and, despite their preponderance in numbers and abundance of weapons, chose to pour petrol into the hideout's entrance and set it alight. As David Carter points out, with this action, the 'death of a terrorist gave birth to a legend'.⁴¹

Within the same framework as *For Ever* is 1958's *The Imprisoned Graves*. The vertical visual represents the graves of EOKA's fighters within a wired fence. As in Georgiou's earlier works, graves are positioned in abstract forms, each inscribed with a fighter's name and his date of death. Alongside the graves a leaflet is depicted while the background shows some flowers on the ground. While in his earlier works Georgiou represented full images of British soldiers, in *The Imprisoned Graves* he depicts only their feet while they step on the wired fence. As with *For Ever*, Georgiou situates his image in a religious context, with a church in the lower part of the image alongside a Greek flag and three female figures whose presence embodies mourning.

⁴¹ Carter (2008).

Georgiou employs the same visual strategy to expose the national trauma and loss. I argue that the abstract icons (such as church, graves, faceless people) and neutral colours emphasise the meaning of the work as national reminiscence. The subject of *The Imprisoned Graves* identifies a small cemetery located in the Central Jail of Nicosia, next to the National Struggle Museum, where the British hanged the young EOKA fighters. In this work Georgiou portrays ten of the imprisoned tombs. Nine of the men buried in these graves were hanged: Michalis Karaolis and Andreas Dimitriou on 10 May 1956; Andreas Zakos, Iakovos Patsatos and Harilaos Michael on 9 August 1956; and Michael Koutsoftas, Stelios Mauromatis and Andreas Panagides on 21 September 1956. Evagoras Pallikaridis was hanged on 14 March 1957. In Georgiou's image, all cited dates are shown under each fighter's name, disclosing with this the importance of their death. All tombs (Georgiou included Afxentiou, who was buried in the same tomb as Pallikaridis despite having died in action) were constructed in the same area, next to the prisoners' cells and the guillotine. The area is enclosed by tall stone walls and covered by a wire fence and glass.

Similarly, Georgiou places the fighter's tombs within a wired fence. As in *Cypria Saga*, Georgiou transmits a symbolic representation of British violation of the Charter of Human Rights, with British boots stepping on fighters' tombs. According to Alfred Simpson, the case of Pallikaridis – who was hanged aged 19 for the charge of possessing a weapon – violates the convention because:

The offence for which he was executed was that of possessing a weapon. It was a light machine gun, and it was not in a serviceable condition at the time he was apprehended. The real reason why he was not reprieved was that the authorities believed, but were unable to prove in a trial, that he had earlier murdered an elderly villager [...] who was suspected of collaboration with the security authorities. Plainly it could be argued that the reality of matters was that attaching the death penalty to the mere possession of a weapon, as this execution revealed, amounted in substance to a violation of the presumption of innocence.⁴²

Georgiou was very influenced from the socio-political conditions of the period. In 1958, after he exhibited *The Imprisoned Graves*, he made an appeal to the British governor, Sir Hugh Foot, to return the bodies of the young fighters to their families. The British refused to return the bodies in fear the funerals would reinforce nationalist spirit and would lead to further demonstrations against colonial rule. All fighters were buried without a ceremonial funeral,

⁴² Simpson (2000), p. 876.

without the presence of a priest and without the presence of their relatives. This imperialistic attitude was greatly offensive to traditional religious rituals, which require a memorial service and the presence of relatives. When Georgiou exhibited his work, the title of the work was adopted by the Greek Cypriot community, who called the small cemetery *Imprisoned Graves*.

The Politics of Belonging

The 1955-59 years were marked by colonial policies of torture chambers, detention camps and the curfew. At the peak of the imposed curfews, there was an increased mobilisation for anti-colonial resistance. This was mostly experienced in houses located within Nicosia's Venetian walls. In his 1964 book *Closed Doors*, Costa Montis⁴³ writes on the conditions of curfew and the traumatic shadow of the gallows that were part of the daily life of Nicosia's residents during the struggle:

In August, the English hanged three other boys, and in September another three. Each time, Nicosia was unable to sleep the night before. The houses, walls, and people tossed and turned with restlessness [...] A crowd knelt in the area outside the prisons, and the voices from the cells sang the Greek anthem. Then came the hopelessness, the silence, finally broke by the cry [...] It was after these hangings that the English institute[d] punitive curfews [...].

The curfew could last several days and for poor families who had little in their cupboards and no income except the daily wages of a father or brother it was a real hardship. When the curfews became regular events, the English would let the women go out for one or two hours to shop for food [...]

[...] And it was not only hunger that the lower classes had to endure, but thirst as well. Many homes in Nicosia got their waters from public taps, and how could they all manage to draw what they needed in the space of two hours? And the strain of the curfew did not end with hunger and thirst. There was a nagging nervousness that affected everyone equally. It was a strain on the nerves similar at times to a breakdown. What, people would ask themselves, will I do if my child suddenly becomes sick during a curfew and I can't get a doctor or

⁴³ Costas Montis (1914-2004) was an influential Greek Cypriot poet and novelist.

medicine? What if my pregnant wife needs attention? A thousand such cares ate at the mind.⁴⁴

Montis' testimony is highly emotive, highlighting both the punitive curfew conditions and the changes in Greek Cypriots lives during the struggle. During that time, politicised activities took place in houses:

There the streets were narrow, and the houses were glued to each other [...] It was in the suburbs that the kites first appeared. During the curfews, you could see hundreds of kites in the air, flown not only by children but also by grown men and women. Were the kites, as some foreign journalists suggested, a desperate attempt to escape from the curfew, so desperate as to almost laughable? Or was it just playing? You could see adults, even old women in black, enjoying their kites dancing in the sky and you feared that all of Nicosia had gone mad. Whatever the cause, the kites from the suburbs arrived over the houses within the walls of Nicosia and brought support and encouragement. The kites maintained contact between people separated by the curfew [...] Who knows for whom the old woman's kite was sent up? The kites were mostly blue and white. They would make their daily walk over the prison walls and offer greetings; they carried our souls above the gallows [...]

The English had to participate, to join that sky filled with Cypriot kites, when their children became jealous [...] Was this the reason that the English never dared forbid the kites, they were afraid to face the wrath of their own children?

Adding to the ridiculousness, during the worst of the emergency measures, they flew their children's kites while armed, a kite string in one hand and a sten gun or pistol in the other! (The kites of the British, I must tell you, were not like ours [...] In the Cypriot sky, among our blue and white kites, those foreign kites seemed like some strange migratory birds).⁴⁵

It is highly significant that Greek Cypriots used blue and white kites. This acts as a form of resistance and reinforces the symbolic association to the Greek national identity.

Conclusion

⁴⁴ Press and Information Office (2005).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

EOKA succeeded in its goal of decolonisation, though Enosis was never achieved. Enosis remained a dream for Cyprus and memories of EOKA are recorded in publications, songs and museums. A collection of artworks can be found in the Municipal Art Gallery of Limassol and the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation collection. The anniversary of the EOKA struggle is celebrated every year on 1st April as a public holiday with a series of religious and public celebrations. The day includes parades of schools and the military holding the Greek and Cypriot flags. As part of the memorials, special edition stamps are issued.⁴⁶ For example, in 2005, as part of the fiftieth anniversary of the EOKA struggle, stamps were issued bearing the image of the 1994 oil painting *The Doorway*, produced by artist Kyriacos Koullis (1918-2002). The work shows in close capture a woman in tears while leaving her house, with the house key in her hand. The door is a traditional one, as would have been seen in the 1950s, with the captions EOKA, ENOSIS, DIGENIS and MAKARIOS on both sides of it. The woman is dressed in a blue outfit with a white scarf. The overall colours of the painting recall the blue and white colours of the Greek flag. In 2015, another stamp was issued to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of EOKA. The 2015 stamp shows an image of schoolboys marching and holding Greek flags.

⁴⁶ Examples are available at <http://www.arxeion-politismou.gr/2017/04/Agonas-EOKA-Kyprou-se-grammatosima.html>.

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