



‘The Pawns That They Moved Here and There’: Microacts, Room for Manoeuvre, and Everyday Agency in the 1974 Cyprus Conflict

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journals.sagepub.com/home/ehq**Huw Halstead**

University of St Andrews, UK

Abstract

Oral testimonies from Greek Cypriots who lived through the Greek dictatorship's 1974 coup d'état on Cyprus and the subsequent Turkish invasion frequently present the narrators as mere pawns in a macro-scale historical drama, having little to no control over or understanding of the broader events unfolding around them. On one level, this rings true, as individual soldiers and civilians were rarely if ever able to dictate or perceive the broader trajectories of the conflict in which they found themselves. Yet this perspective belies the subtler reality that even in chaotic conditions and under deeply restricted circumstances people exercise agency and create spaces, however small, in which to operate as autonomous agents and to shape their own personal trajectories. Whilst they could not leave the chessboard, these 'pawns' actively moved themselves here and there, performing microacts that locally refracted official diktats and ideologies in mutable ways. Moreover, in the construction of their testimonies they assert further agency, assembling these microacts into meaningful narratives by placing them within broader historical frameworks.

Keywords*Alltagsgeschichte*, Cyprus 1974, everyday life, memory, oral history, war**Corresponding author:**

Huw Halstead, University of St Andrews, UK.

Email: hh79@st-andrews.ac.uk

In Vasilis Gkourogiannis's novel *Blood on the Green Line*, a group of Greek veterans who served in the Hellenic Force in Cyprus (ELDYK) during the 1974 Cyprus conflict gather together at a conference in Cyprus, alongside a young Greek historian, to share their memories of the conflict. Yet most of the veterans are reticent about speaking, and when one finally begins to recount his memories, the president of the veterans' association that convened the meeting becomes frustrated at the fragmented and highly personalized nature of his testimony, imploring him to provide details of battles and officers' orders that historians can use rather than scattered anecdotes of fear, confusion and boredom. The atmosphere is tense and hesitant, so one veteran proposes an alternative approach:

I will ask the historian to speak to us. For thirty-something years the historians have been studying the documents. [The historian] must tell us what happened in Cyprus rather than we [tell] the historians. What were we? The pawns that they moved here and there.¹

This sense not only of having had no control over their own lives as events unfolded around them, but also of the inadequacy of one's own personal experiences as historical evidence, is a common trope in the oral testimonies of Greek Cypriots who experienced the Greek dictatorship's coup d'état on Cyprus and the subsequent Turkish invasion. On one level, this rings true, as individual soldiers and civilians were rarely if ever able to dictate or perceive the broader trajectories of the conflict in which they found themselves. Yet this perspective belies the subtler reality that even in chaotic conditions and under deeply restricted circumstances people exercise agency and carve out 'room for manoeuvre'.² As Alf Lüdtke put it, 'the so-called dominated are oftentimes (very) active in determining the course of events, asymmetries in resources or means of action notwithstanding'.³ Michel de Certeau called this the 'tactics' and 'ways of "making do"' that people use to navigate with agency and creativity in contexts not of their own creation.⁴

Similar 'tactics' can be seen in the imposed conditions of war. Based on oral history testimonies, I follow the stories of Greek Cypriot men and women as they sought to navigate both the internecine political conflict and the state-level military confrontation whilst also protecting their families and watching their own backs, 'meandering' as they did so between different identity nodes.⁵ Their narratives demonstrate that whilst they could not leave the chessboard, as 'pawns' they actively *moved themselves* here and there, performing microacts that locally refracted official diktats and ideologies in mutable ways and shaped – sometimes significantly – the course of their own individual histories. The

¹ Vasilis Gkourogiannis, *Blood on the Green Line* [Κόκκινο στην Πράσινη Γραμμή] (Athens 2009), 131.

² Alf Lüdtke, 'Ordinary People, Self-Energising, and Room for Manoeuvring: Examples from 20th Century Europe', in Alf Lüdtke, ed., *Everyday Life in Mass Dictatorship: Collusion and Evasion* (Basingstoke 2016), 13–34.

³ Alf Lüdtke, 'Introductory Notes', in Alf Lüdtke, ed., *Everyday Life in Mass Dictatorship: Collusion and Evasion* (Basingstoke 2016), 3.

⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA 1984), 18.

⁵ Lüdtke, 'Ordinary People'.

testimonies also highlight the agency inherent in the construction of autobiographical memory and show that people act more like historians than they think, scrutinizing and organizing their reminiscences to make sense of their experiences and to render them meaningful by placing them within broader historical and narrative frameworks.

Cyprus from Independence to Division

In 1960 – after a violent struggle between British colonial authorities and the Greek Cypriot nationalist movement EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters) that aimed to achieve *énosis*, or union, with Greece – Cyprus became an independent country. Greece, Turkey and Britain signed a treaty guaranteeing Cypriot independence and prohibiting both *énosis* and its counterpart *taksim*, the division of the island along ethnic lines advocated by the TMT (Turkish Resistance Organization), established by Turkish Cypriot nationalists in response to EOKA. The newly independent Cypriot Republic was deeply divided: rising nationalism had fomented tension between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and the compromise of Cypriot independence had caused an internal split amongst Greek Cypriot nationalists between supporters of the more moderate (and freshly elected Cypriot president) Archbishop Makarios III and those of the extremist former Greek military officer Georgios Grivas who still advocated for *énosis*. In 1963–1964, following attempts by Makarios to amend the constitution in a manner that would have concentrated greater power in the Greek Cypriot majority, intercommunal violence broke out, resulting in Turkish threats of intervention and the ghettoization of a large portion of the Turkish Cypriot community who retreated into armed enclaves. During these troubles, Grivas – who had been exiled to Greece after Cypriot independence – returned to take charge of a division of soldiers sent to the island by Greece and, before long, the Cypriot National Guard as well. Faced with Grivas's growing influence, Makarios took steps to expand his own armed police force.⁶

The advent in April 1967 of a military dictatorship in Greece led by Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos strengthened the hand of those Greek Cypriots still pushing for *énosis*. In November 1967, further intercommunal violence broke out on Cyprus after Grivas's forces were fired upon whilst attempting to dismantle a Turkish Cypriot roadblock, which Grivas used as a pretext to overrun two Turkish villages, causing multiple casualties. Turkey mobilized for war, but conflict was avoided when Greece agreed to withdraw Grivas and around 10,000 Greek troops stationed on the island (which far exceeded the number allowed under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee). In 1971, however, Grivas returned to Cyprus and founded the organization EOKA B with the aim of reviving *énosis*. EOKA B waged a campaign of violence targeting supporters of Makarios, his armed police force,

⁶ Harry Anastasiou, *The Broken Olive Branch: Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and the Quest for Peace in Cyprus. Volume One: The Impasse of Ethnonationalism* (Syracuse, NY 2008), 91–6; Jan Asmussen, *Cyprus at War: Diplomacy and Conflict During the 1974 Crisis* (London 2008), 13; Clement Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict* (Basingstoke 2010), 49; Bill Mallinson, *Cyprus: A Modern History* (London 2005), 35–6, 46; Brendan O'Malley and Ian Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy: America, Espionage and the Turkish Invasion* (London 1999), 87–100, 103, 114, 119.

and left-wingers.⁷ Political tensions ran high, especially for those performing military service in the National Guard: interviewees recall incessant propagandizing against communism by Greek officers sent by the Athens junta; as one of my interviewees put it, 'there might not have been a junta here in Cyprus, but with all of those *chountikoí* [junta-supporting officers] it was like there was one, particularly in the military'.⁸ Not wishing to be caught up in the violence and mutual suspicion, many of my informants devised tactics of 'distancing' to keep themselves and their families aloof from politics.⁹ When Penelope (born 1956) needed a newspaper to cover her school desk for art class, her left-wing father would not let her take the communist newspaper *Haravgi* and instead provided her with a centrist alternative that made less of an explicit political statement.¹⁰

In January 1974, Grivas died, leaving Greek junta officer Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannidis – who had deposed Papadopoulos in November 1973 – to assume control over EOKA B and the Cypriot National Guard, the latter comprised primarily of Greek Cypriot conscripts but loaded with pro-junta and fanatically anti-communist Greek officers. Makarios outlawed EOKA B in April 1974 and at the beginning of July demanded in an open letter that the Greek junta remove its officers from the National Guard. In response, EOKA B – supported by the National Guard – staged a coup d'état on 15 July overthrowing Makarios and installing as the new president of Cyprus EOKA veteran Nikos Sampson. Fierce fighting ensued for several days between pro- and anti-Makarios forces, lasting longest in the strongly pro-Makarios Paphos region, whilst Makarios escaped capture (and the island) with the help of the British.¹¹

Turkey, invoking its role as guarantor of Cypriot independence, responded to the coup d'état by launching an invasion of Cyprus from the north on 20 July. Despite repeated warnings by international partners, both Sampson in Cyprus and the dictatorship in Greece were slow to respond to the threat of Turkish invasion: Sampson only began to move troops to the north of the island on 19 July (and later in desperation released those arrested during the coup d'état) and both Greece and Cyprus waited until 20 July to begin general mobilization. Fighting broke out across the island as the National Guard not only sought to repel the Turkish forces moving in from the north but also – alongside EOKA B fighters – engaged Turkish Cypriot militia that were guarding the enclaves formed after the 1963–1964 troubles. The National Guard managed to slow the Turkish advance, but its efforts were hampered by insufficient and inadequate arms, as well as by the fact that many troops had been moved away from the north to

⁷ Anastasiou, *The Broken Olive Branch*, 98–9; Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict*, 80; James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford 2011), 40–1; Mallinson, *Cyprus*, 51; O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 126–8, 135.

⁸ Christos, interview with the author, 11 August 2009.

⁹ Alf Lüdtke, 'Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are its Practitioners?' in Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, NJ 1995), 19.

¹⁰ Penelope, interview with the author, 1 September 2009.

¹¹ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 17–19, 34–6; Mallinson, *Cyprus*, 80; O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 153–4, 170.

fight against pro-Makarios forces and that some 10,000 men of military age had been detained by the coupists.¹²

After a ceasefire beginning on 22 July, during which Turkey landed more troops on the island, the fighting resumed on 14 August and lasted until 16 August. Turkey now controlled over a third of the island, and hundreds of thousands of Greek Cypriot civilians were displaced from the occupied north to the south, with Turkish Cypriots heading in the other direction shortly thereafter. The conflict left some 4000 Greek Cypriots dead and 1500–2000 missing, and around 1000 Turkish Cypriots dead or missing.¹³

The Pawns Moving Themselves: Miniatures from Cyprus 1974

Miniatures and Fragments

In his classic text on *Alltagsgeschichte* (the history of everyday life), Lüdtkke argues that historians must pay attention to the ambivalence and multiplicity of ‘individual situations’ as a means of ‘highlighting history as a process, as a plaiting of strands, a mosaic of (inter)actions’. These ‘miniatures’ function to lay bare the ‘density’ of everyday experience and can be assembled into collages or mosaics, not with the intention of crafting a comprehensive or generalizable history of a particular period or event, but, in Lüdtkke’s words, to ‘make individual layers or nodes within societal “patchwork” structures three-dimensional and plastic’.¹⁴ In other words, the objective is not to change the scale of analysis from the macro to the micro but rather to ‘play with the scales’ in order to explore how macro-level occurrences resonate on micro-scales, and vice versa.¹⁵ Oral history, with its fine attention to the representation of individual experience on local levels, is apposite for the assemblage of mosaics of miniatures. Alessandro Portelli presents his oral history of the 1944 Fosse Ardeatine massacre in Rome in much these terms as ‘a multivoiced narrative, a montage of fragments of varying lengths’.¹⁶

In what follows, through selected miniatures or fragments from oral testimonies of those who experienced the 1974 Cyprus conflict, I pursue a twofold analysis. Firstly, I examine individual manoeuvrings, tactics, and ways of ‘making do’ within chaotic and turbulent circumstances. Secondly, because oral histories are best seen, in Portelli’s words, as ‘not the memory and the tale but the remembering and the telling’, I interrogate the telling of these stories and the efforts of the narrators to make sense out of – and

¹² Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 36, 100–1, 105; Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict*, 114; Mallinson, *Cyprus*, 81–2; O’Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 188–9.

¹³ Mallinson, *Cyprus*, 83–4; O’Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 156, 188.

¹⁴ Alf Lüdtkke, ‘Introduction’, 21.

¹⁵ Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris and Jacques Revel, ‘Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History’, *The International History Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2011), 573–84.

¹⁶ Alessandro Portelli, *The Order has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Basingstoke 2003), 17.

impose order upon – chaotic and largely uncontrollable experiences.¹⁷ I draw on two source bases: personally conducted oral history interviews and testimonies from the archive of *The Cyprus Oral History & Living Memory Project* (henceforth *Cyprus Project*).¹⁸

To guard against narrative fragmentation, and because I am interested in the texture of individual episodes and their telling, I prioritize detailed investigation of selected testimonies presented in their historical and narrative context.¹⁹ In each of the three sections below – organized thematically and, more loosely, geographically – I focus on the stories of two individuals or family units. For the avoidance of doubt, I – like Lüdtkke – make no claim whatsoever that these particular testimonies are in any way representative of the experiences of Greek Cypriots in 1974 – locally or nationally – nor that their collage constitutes a comprehensive historical investigation of that conflict. Rather, my aim is to be able to explore in praxis how macro-level processes might play out on micro-scales, and, in turn, how these micro-scale stories are essential for grasping the variegated, textured and multi-layered nature of macro-processes.

Between Soldier and Civilian in Famagusta: The Stylianou and Adamou Families

In this section, I take a close look at the experiences – often divergent yet sometimes overlapping – of soldiers and civilians in 1974 through the testimonies of members of two families from the Famagusta area. The Stylianou family was right-wing (though not particularly politically involved) and from the small village Prastio. In 2009, I interviewed Louisa (born 1952), her brothers Sofronios (born 1947) and Spiros (born 1949), and her Greek husband Fotis (born in Chalkidiki in Greece in 1949).²⁰ I conducted follow-up

¹⁷ Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out*, 14.

¹⁸ I interviewed 32 Greek Cypriots and one Greek in 2009 and in 2019–2020 using a semi-structured approach that, following Portelli, treats the interview not as a monologue by the interviewee but a dialogue between interviewer and interviewee (Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY 1991), 31). The *Cyprus Oral History & Living Memory Project* archive contains transcripts (and often audio recordings) of interviews with Greek and Turkish Cypriots conducted by researchers affiliated with the Frederick Research Centre (Cyprus). These testimonies may be used for research purposes under the following conditions: ‘The contents of the Cyprus Oral History website and the Cyprus Oral History Archive are part of the Cyprus Oral History project at Frederick Research Center (FRC). You may not reproduce, distribute, transmit, display, prepare derivative works, use full texts in a book or as entire book chapters or articles, or perform any copyrighted material from the Cyprus Oral History website without the prior written consent of the Cyprus Oral History project coordinator and the Cyprus Oral History Archive Committee, except as provided below. You may copy and print the content of the Cyprus Oral History Archive, for personal use and for research and teaching purposes, provided that (a) you include all copyright and other notices contained in the website (b) you acknowledge the source of the contents and the Cyprus Oral History Archive and (c) you do not modify the content’. The interviews analysed in this article were all conducted in Greek. In accordance with the ethical agreements reached with participants, my interviewees are pseudonymized. The *Cyprus Project* interviewees are referred to by their real names, following the convention adopted by that archive. The archive can be found here: <http://www.frederick.ac.cy/research/oralhistory/>

¹⁹ Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out*, 18.

²⁰ Fotis, interview with the author, 5 October 2009; Louisa, interview with the author, 4 October 2009; Sofronios, interview with the author, 8 October 2009; Spiros, interview with the author, 8 October 2009.

interviews with Louisa and Fotis in 2020.²¹ Louisa and Fotis lived in Greece but were on holiday in Louisa's village on Cyprus in July 1974.

All Greek Cypriot men who had completed their military service were reservists in the National Guard and, in the event of general mobilization, were to report to the rendezvous points written on their release papers. On the morning of 20 July, one of Louisa's other military-age brothers – let's call him Panos – was sleeping outside and, in the early hours, tuned in to BBC radio (he was honing his English) to hear reports of a Turkish landing at Kyrenia. Suddenly, Louisa remembers, he came running into the house shouting, 'mum, find my army boots, everybody wake up, wake up, the Turks have come, the Turks!' The rest of the family was somewhat in disbelief – 'we hadn't yet absorbed it', Louisa says, "'you'll wake up the whole neighbourhood, shame on you", my mother said to him' – but Panos was certain that mobilization would follow and woke up other young men in the neighbourhood, and together they headed out to hitch lifts to their rendezvous points before the call to arms had been issued on the radio. Sofronios, a teacher, was at an educational camp with schoolchildren in the Troodos Mountains on 20 July, and hearing the call on the radio drove straight to the village. Louisa and Fotis describe his arrival almost identically: 'he came running up to the house, and shouted from the road, "the country is burning, the country is burning! My canteen! My canteen! Mum, mum, where are my [military] clothes? Where is my canteen?"' Within a few minutes, he too had set off to his unit.

Greece was also mobilizing, but Fotis – a Greek citizen and reservist in the Greek army – had no way to travel to Greece to report for duty. There was some discussion that he should try to volunteer with the forces already in Cyprus, but his mother-in-law advised against it, fearing that if he fought 'unofficially' in this way he might later be considered a deserter from his own unit in Greece. Meanwhile, Louisa's brother Spiros – a student in Thessaloniki, Greece – was experiencing the same problem in the other direction. Hearing news of the invasion, he got together with some other Cypriot students aiming to get to Cyprus to report for duty, heading first to Athens by train then boarding the civilian boat *Rethymnon* alongside a large number of Greek soldiers being dispatched clandestinely to Cyprus. Amidst considerable confusion, the boat was forced to put in at Rhodes:

Now, I don't know what happened, but by the morning the ship, instead of heading east, was sailing west and going very slowly, so there was a lot of confusion on board. Now, the commanding officer on the ship was [junta-aligned Greek officer Dimitris] Papapostolou ... In the midst of the confusion, they started setting up Browning anti-aircraft guns on the deck, as if they were ready to repel an aerial attack, but we were just passengers and so we weren't told what was going on, we were just trying to interpret the evidence. Meanwhile, the television was working on the boat, and it talked about the [Turkish] landings that were happening [on Cyprus], the fighting that was going on, the diplomatic activity that was going on ... [Papapostolou] gathered us together and said, 'the Americans have

²¹ Fotis, interview with the author, 26 May 2020; Louisa, interview with the author, 26 May 2020.

stopped us' ... But, as I found out later from talking to people, it wasn't so, that's not what happened. But anyway, they took us to Rhodes.

Not for the last time, Spiros emphasizes a sense of confusion and disorientation, of being a powerless observer of rapidly changing events. Yet at the same time his narrative foregrounds efforts to decrypt this chaos and to place his own experiences within the broader framework of the developing conflict, both contemporaneously (through efforts to connect what was said in the media with his own eyewitness observations) and retrospectively (as in his slightly cryptic reference to having later learned the truth about the *Rethymnon's* about-turn).

Back in Prastio, Louisa and Fotis were desperate for information about the brothers in the army, particularly as they had heard that the commando unit to which Panos belonged had taken heavy casualties in fighting at St Hilarion. After the ceasefire was declared, Fotis headed out by bicycle to the army base at the village Lefkoniko in an effort to gather intelligence, but *en route* took a wrong turn and mistakenly fetched up in a neighbouring Turkish Cypriot village. Fotis remembers:

And I found myself amongst the Turks [sic], without knowing it. Fortunately, however, and I want to say this, an elderly Turkish [Cypriot] grandad said to me, 'my son, you are a *Kalamarás* [a Greek of Greece: the old man had recognized his accent]. Be careful, young man, please go home, don't you understand you've come to a Turkish village?' And I hold on to the memory of this man, someone who I never expected would protect me.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to the family, Spiros had during the ceasefire made it to Limassol by boat. Yet it was some time still before he would make it to an army unit that was both willing to have him and that met his own criteria of what it meant to do his duty. Arriving in Limassol, as Spiros describes it, he and his fellow students were impatient to contribute something to the war effort:

One of the people I was with said, 'lads, shall I organize for us to go up near Morphou, where there's an EOKA B unit?', so we could go there and fight against a certain Turkish [Cypriot] village. But on the first night they gave us green military clothes and an officer said, 'you should stay here, we'll have you guard Turkish [Cypriot] properties'. And we said, 'why did we come all this way to guard Turkish properties? We want to go and fight, to do something'.

Spiros does not make it clear how he felt about this proposition to join up with EOKA B fighters and, indeed, politics is by and large conspicuous by its absence in his testimony: any reservations he may have had about the coupists are not expressed at this stage. He continues:

So the officer said, 'well, since you want to leave, I'll stick you in a medical unit'. But still this whisper was going around that we should go and fight against this big Turkish [Cypriot]

village. In the end, the officer got fed up with us, and said, 'okay, you should all go to your rendezvous points'.

Spiros reported at an army post in Famagusta and was immediately given four days leave so returned to nearby Prastio. In the village, however, he felt 'ashamed, because people were saying, "well, what's he doing here when everyone else is off fighting?"' Accordingly, before his leave was up, Spiros went back to the post in Famagusta, where a different officer finally dispatched him to an infantry brigade based nearby.

On one subsequent afternoon, a Greek officer ordered Spiros to set off at 2:30 am the following morning to fire at a hostile guard post with his bazooka. Spiros fretted about his mission, which sounded high risk. At this point, politics abruptly intrudes into Spiros's testimony, as he contextualizes his reluctance by drawing a dividing line between himself and the coupist officers:

Then I don't know what happened exactly, but around midnight it was announced, 'everyone in the vehicles, we're leaving'. And to tell you the truth I didn't say anything, because the others [fellow rank-and-file soldiers] had been saying to me, 'are you mad? To go off [with the bazooka]? Why don't those coupists go and do it? They're sending you to get killed instead of them'. So I was a bit afraid, and I didn't say anything, I didn't say I was supposed to be going off with the bazooka, and I got on the vehicles [and we left].

In the following days, the second phase of the conflict in full swing, Spiros became increasingly concerned for his relatives back in the village:

[The Turkish army was] heading out towards Famagusta across the Mesaoria plain, and I was thinking, 'will they know this in Prastio?' If I'd had a motorbike, I'd have gone there and warned them, 'go, go!' Well, complete confusion reigned, everybody said whatever they felt, some people just left and nobody said anything to them, but I thought 'well, supposing I go, I've got nowhere to go, here it's the army', so I stayed.

Spiros's concerns were valid. Back in Prastio, Louisa and her remaining family members were (almost) caught unawares by the Turkish advance: 'we didn't know it was coming. We heard on the radio, "our troops are resisting stoutly, our troops are regrouping", and we stayed in the village'. On 14 August, a fellow villager came through the village on his bike shouting, 'the Turks are coming, the lines have broken!' He operated a stall on the Famagusta-Nicosia road and had been told by retreating National Guard troops that the lines had broken. Louisa continues:

And then the armed left before the unarmed! My brother had [left behind] a new car full of petrol, but none of us knew how to drive. We went out onto the road, and we stopped a lorry full of goats, we got on the back of the lorry, and he took us to the British [sovereign] base [area Dhekelia].

Spiros, meanwhile, was still with his unit and, amidst the chaos, confusion and endless to-ing and fro-ing of the Greek Cypriot retreat, Spiros recalls sitting in a lorry when an officer pulled up in his Land Rover. This is what Spiros says happened next:

I ran over to the Land Rover to look to steal cigarettes. But I saw a file there, which I opened, and I wish I'd kept the piece of paper, because it was the famous order from the army high command saying that the following units are disbanded, and that loss of weapons is justified. So I thought, 'well that's why they're all leaving with their own weapons, and nobody says anything to them'. When I'd been in the army that was the one thing they told us, that we weren't to do that, and I regret that I didn't take that piece of paper as a souvenir ... But amongst the list of units that were disbanded was mine.

Whether Spiros really did find this piece of paper (and correctly interpret its content) or not is unknowable and, from my perspective, hardly the most interesting thing about the story. What is of greater significance is that in the telling of this story he finds an exegesis for his experiences of chaos, confusion and helplessness.

More about this episode in a moment, but first I turn to the Adamou family. I interviewed, separately, husband and wife Rena (born 1952 in Ktima, Paphos) and Christos (born 1950 in Deryneia, Famagusta) in 2009 and again in 2020.²² In July 1974, they were living in Deryneia and Rena was heavily pregnant. Both came from Makarios-supporting families. Christos responded to the general mobilization along with his brother-in-law and they found themselves sheltering for safety in some orange groves near the army base in a suburb of Famagusta. Christos recalls during both interviews that at first morale was good:

The *chountikoí* [junta-supporting officers] said to us, 'we'll bring you weapons, don't worry, don't worry, and the aeroplanes [overhead] are Greek!' So that we would not lose our morale, understand? [2009]

[They said to us], 'wait for us here, we'll bring you food, we'll bring you weapons. Don't worry, we're controlling the situation, the Turks have not succeeded, we've repelled them'. So we waited. At first, we had enthusiasm. An enthusiasm that we had confronted the Turks and that we would not allow them to get into our country. [2020]

By the third day, however, with neither weapons nor food forthcoming, rumblings of discontent were turning into spontaneous desertions:

After three days without any weapons, most people left. They could see they were just going to be slaughtered: sheep for the slaughter. Because if the war had continued, what would we have done without weapons? So it just broke up. You didn't ask anyone, you just left. [2009]

²² Christos, interview with the author, 11 October 2009; Christos, interview with the author, 27 May 2020; Rena, interview with the author, 13 August 2009; Rena, interview with the author, 27 May 2020.

When we understood the situation, that it was a joke, a gaggle, without food or weapons, [we said], 'let's get the heck out of here!' ... Most of those who went to report to the army were against that whole situation with EOKA B and the Greek officers. There was a discord, we could not coexist with those people. Because they provoked the invasion, and we did not want them because they were the beginning of the destruction of our country. [2020]

Christos and his brother-in-law, with the additional motivation of checking on pregnant Rena, decided to leave together on the afternoon of 23 July, hitching a lift back to Deryneia, and that evening Rena's waters broke. Christos wanted to take his wife to hospital in Famagusta by car, but EOKA B militia had taken over the village and would not allow him to drive: 'you cannot travel', a man sporting a Kalashnikov and a beret marked 'EOKA B' told him, 'we are in charge. You are not free to do whatever you want, to take your wife to the hospital. I will drive'. Christos is adamant that this was done not out of concern for the family's safety but rather to conspicuously demonstrate EOKA B's power over political opponents like the Adamou family.

When the fighting resumed, Christos did not attempt to return to his unit. There is a discrepancy between the interviews in 2009 and 2020 as to whether there was any formal call to (return to) arms after 14 August, but no uncertainty as to Christos's attitude:

In the second round, I didn't go to the army. They called up soldiers, but it was chaos. I reckoned it would be slaughter, which is what happened. [2009]

I didn't return [to the army], nor did they ask me to. I had no thought of returning, because it was all such a betrayal. [2020]

With the Turkish army advancing towards Famagusta, the family fled southwards. More laconic than her husband, Rena concluded her potted version of these events in much the same way in both 2009 and 2020:

Rena: The Turks always had their eye on Cyprus. And this time the Americans didn't stop them. It was a plan of Kissinger and the Athens junta. Also, I've heard that British aeroplanes were locating military targets for the Turks.

Halstead: Do you believe that?

Rena: Yes, I believe it because that's what England always wanted: the division of the island. Divide and rule. [2009]

It was a betrayal. It was clear. From EOKA B, together with the Greek junta and the Americans with Kissinger, and the English put their hand in. The powerful rule over the weak. [2020]

In the experiences of the Stylianou and Adamou families we see the broader trajectory of the Cyprus conflict – the movement of armies, frontlines and refugees – as composed

of numerous smaller trajectories that involved not just following orders but also anticipating them, as in the case of Panos's pre-emptive mobilization, disobeying them, as in Spiros's silence over the bazooka episode or Christos's decision to abscond from his unit, and carving one's own path through the turbulence, as with Fotis's spontaneous bicycle expedition or Louisa's flight with the goats. Despite their highly localized character, these trajectories were far from inconsequential in determining how the individuals concerned navigated the macro-process of the invasion: if Spiros had gone off with his bazooka (or simply wandered off after the *Rethymnon* returned to Greece); if the Turkish Cypriot elder had not warned Fotis to leave before he ran into potential difficulties; if Christos had remained with, or attempted to return to, his unit; if the stallholder in Prastio had not received and spread the alert, each of these individual stories could have ended very differently.

These miniatures also disaggregate the notion of 'desertion' on Cyprus in 1974. From a top-down perspective, unit depletion may be seen rather simplistically (even unsympathetically) in terms of poorly disciplined rank-and-file soldiers who, somewhat two-dimensionally, either have sufficient discipline and courage to remain at their posts or do not. For Christos, however, leaving the army was carefully considered in relation to a range of factors – not just his own survival chances but also the likelihood of being adequately equipped to make a meaningful contribution, his resentment towards those in charge, and his anxiety about his pregnant wife – and ultimately what he saw himself as deserting was not defence of the country but rather the officers whom he associated with the coup d'état that provoked the Turkish invasion. Something similar applies to Spiros's opportunistic abandonment of his bazooka mission. In both cases, the question is not whether they were willing to fight so much as for *what* they were willing to fight and under what *conditions*. Moreover, both Spiros's aborted bazooka mission and Christos's encounter with the Kalashnikov-wielding EOKA B man lay bare the density and complexity of this moment in history, which it is not possible – as it might appear through a macro-lens – to compartmentalize into the period of the coup d'état and the time of the invasion. Rather, the tensions (and pretensions) of the coup d'état persisted into and affected the lived experience of the invasion. *Alltagsgeschichte* enables us to reveal these multi-causal and multifaceted aspects of historical processes.

Narratives of conspiracy and treachery in 1974 – by Greek/Greek Cypriot nationalists and/or foreign powers – have gained significant currency in Cyprus, and it is beyond the scope of this article to evaluate the debates around these issues.²³ What is relevant here, however, is how both Rena and Christos use the notion of internal betrayal and, in the former's case, conspiratorial Anglo-American interference as framing devices to transform personal impressions of confusion, fear and uncertainty into a coherent and intelligible narrative. Similarly, like the historian finding a smoking-gun document in an

²³ On which, see, for instance, John Burke, *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis of 1974: Conflict, Colonialism and the Politics of Remembrance in Greek Cypriot Society* (London 2017); Andreas Constandinos, *The Cyprus Crisis: Examining the Role of the British and American Governments During 1974* (Plymouth 2012); Christopher Hitchens, *Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger* (London 1997); Mallinson, *Cyprus*; O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*; John Reddaway, *Burdened with Cyprus: The British Connection* (London 1986).

archive, Spiros uses his story of the incriminating order found in the Land Rover to make sense of what he saw with his own eyes and to place defeat, the nature of that defeat, and the desertions that he witnessed within a broader interpretive framework in which blame lies firmly with those in command. In narratives that are otherwise highly personalized, localized and circumscribed, the Land Rover story and references to betrayal and conspiracy act as points of suture connecting the narrators' own personal trajectories to the broader history of the conflict, anchoring their fragmented experiences within something more solid, thinkable and communicable.

The testimonies of those I interviewed twice show interesting differences and continuities between 2009 and 2020, reflecting how autobiographical memory is not simply a process of retrieval of unchanging and ossified 'facts' or impressions from the past, but rather one of reconstruction and creation in the present based on reworking the past (and prior rehearsals of its narration) in relation to current circumstances.²⁴ In the testimonies considered here, the most volatile aspects are related to chronology and other contextual details: in 2020 Christos initially reported having stayed with his unit for a few days longer than he had claimed in 2009 and was inconsistent as to whether there was a renewed call to arms on 14 August. Direct speech – for instance, precisely what the Turkish Cypriot man said to Fotis – varied between 2009 and 2020, though the *force* of these utterances remained the same (echoing Ulric Neisser's observations of the Watergate tapes).²⁵ What was remarkably consistent across the 11-year gap was where interviewees placed narrative emphasis: Louisa's vivid description of her brothers' departures; Fotis's gratitude to the elderly Turkish Cypriot; Christos's anger at watching Famagusta burn whilst his officers fed him lies; or Rena's off-the-peg references to foreign conspiracy. For these narrators, even if its minutiae were volatile, the *meaning* of the past – the history – was fairly settled.

Meandering in Nicosia: Savvas Antoniou and the Markou Family

This section picks up a thread from Spiros and Christos's narratives by considering the persistence of Greek Cypriot intracommunal political tension after the Turkish landing and the consequent meandering – both literal and psychological/identarian – undertaken by one soldier and one family of civilians around the Nicosia area. *Cyprus Project* interviewee Savvas Antoniou (born 1948), like Spiros, experienced a self-propelled, convoluted and somewhat fortuitous journey to the frontline.²⁶ After hearing the call to arms on the radio, left-winger Savvas attempted to do his duty as a reservist commando

²⁴ Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester 2007), 75–90; Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, Francis J. Ditter and Vida Yazdi Ditter, trans (New York 1980), 69; Ulric Neisser, 'Self-Narratives: True and False', in Ulric Neisser and Robyn Fivush, eds, *The Remembering Self: Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative* (Cambridge 1994), 1–18; Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 15–16, 26, 50–1, 61.

²⁵ Ulric Neisser, 'John Dean's Memory: A Case Study', *Cognition*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1981), 1–22.

²⁶ Savvas Antoniou, interview with the *Cyprus Project*, available via the *Cyprus Oral History Archive* at <http://www.frederick.ac.cy/research/oralhistory/index.php/nnnn-oral-history-archive-sp-184245723/58-antoniou-savvas-male-1948-nicosia-cypriot-greek-cypriot-1948> (accessed 5 May 2020).

whilst also keeping one eye on his family and still smarting from the intracommunal violence of the coup d'état, during which his father-in-law and brother were arrested by the coupists and he himself had to temporarily go into hiding. On 20 July, he was in his wife's village some 20 km west of Nicosia, and – having decided there was no way of making it to his rendezvous point in the Pentadaktylos mountain range in the north of the island – set off by truck to attempt to volunteer at a nearby camp. He was deeply unimpressed with the reception he received from the (most likely Greek) officers in charge:

Savvas: At the first army base that I found at Agios Vasileios I got out [of the truck] to tell them that, because I was a commando in this region and I knew the region well, Agios Vasileios and the mountain above, I told them I wanted to stay there because I did not have any means of getting to Buffavento [his rendezvous point]. Make use of me. And they said to me, 'we do not want anyone here, leave'. And they threw me out of the base ...

Interviewer: Without giving solutions, 'do what you want' let's say?

Savvas: Yes, do what you want. That's how organized those who did the coup d'état were.

As this extract makes clear, Savvas's efforts to obey the gist of his orders – to report for duty – also involved the decision to disregard the particularities of these orders – to report to a particular location – and his reasons for doing so were based on an independent analysis of what was possible and where he would be of most use; in other words, his own interpretation of how his microacts would best contribute to the macro-story of the nation's defence was decisive in determining his trajectory. Indeed, undeterred by the cold shoulder he had received at the first camp, Savvas set off in search of another unit that might take him. However, having heard that his village Gerolakko had been bombed, he first made a pit stop there to check up on his parents, where he got into a verbal confrontation with some coupists, probably EOKA B fighters:

When I got out at Gerolakko, I was indignant because those clever coupists were at the station and said to me, 'what are you looking for here?' And I said to them, 'what are you looking for here, you who are carrying weapons and wandering about. Why don't you go to report for duty?' And I became angry and I got into the car again and left.

Savvas headed next to Nicosia by bus, where at some point in the vicinity of the ELDYK camp he disembarked – apparently to attempt to rescue some babies who were crying by the side of the road amidst aerial bombardment – only to be left there when the driver became fearful and drove off. 'So I didn't have anything [else] to do', Savvas recalls, 'and I went into ELDYK'. After telling the Greek officers that he was a reservist commando they agreed to let him fight with them as, in his words, an 'unregistered soldier'.

When the ceasefire was declared, Savvas walked back to his village Gerolakko in search of his loved ones. He was told by some neighbours that his parents had already left the village, but he nevertheless headed to the family home to find food as he had

not eaten since Saturday morning. Whilst he was in the house, the neighbouring house was hit by a bomb, and he left in short order to go to his wife's village where he found his wife, two-month-old baby, and his parents-in-law. When the fighting resumed in earnest on 14 August, Savvas did not repeat his earlier efforts to mobilize, justifying his decision by decrying the cowardice and treachery of EOKA B:

Because I understood that it was all a sell-out ... Because when we came here [i.e. when they responded to the mobilization] I fought by chance. We went to two army bases and they didn't give us weapons. And I stayed up there where the EOKA B wise guys were and were doing their tough guy bit, intimidating people and not one of them was coming to fight.

The Markou family, all civilians, likewise found themselves to-ing and fro-ing around and beyond their home in Nicosia. My interviewees Kitsa (born 1930) and her daughter Lena (born 1959) were at their home in Nicosia close to the dividing Green Line (established after the 1963–1964 troubles).²⁷ Kitsa's husband had come of military age whilst Cyprus was part of the British Empire and had therefore never done military service and was not a reservist. The family was pro-Makarios.

The family was awoken early on 20 July by the sounds of fighting (probably the battle that had commenced at the nearby Turkish Cypriot enclave Geunyeli) and the sight of Turkish parachutists in the sky. The next-door family – let's call them the Kyriakou family – owned a car, and together both families, having received no official advice, elected to retreat a few kilometres south to the house of family friends that we'll call the Demetriou family. Here they sheltered outside under tree cover. On 21 July, some members of Makarios's police force – who had been detained during the coup d'état but subsequently released to combat the invasion – came to the Demetriou house to look (unsuccessfully) for weaponry. Looking back, Lena too makes sense of this experience by placing it within a narrative of betrayal by the right-wing Greek dictatorship: 'they had no weapons. Everything which happened with the junta, it was all betrayal, everything disappeared, and in Kyrenia all the camps were empty, they did not have weapons to give to the soldiers to fight the Turks'. Kitsa concurs, remarking to me – after checking with her daughter if it was appropriate to speak freely – that the EOKA B militiamen were 'criminals, they destroyed Cyprus'.

The Makarios men, failing to find arms, elected to stay the night at the Demetriou home, and, with the group thus growing in size, Kitsa decided that they needed to mount a resupply mission. After dark, she and two others drove back to Nicosia in the Kyriakou car. 'My mother is very tough', Lena remarks, 'we call her "the guerrilla"'. She went with them to gather supplies, because my father did not have a clue what she wanted to bring'. On the road to Nicosia, another car passed in the opposite direction, and the occupants shouted to them, 'leave, the Turks have taken Kyrenia, don't listen to what they're saying on the radio!' Kitsa and co. proceeded with great caution to their house in Nicosia, retrieving quantities of meat and potatoes, but also, Kitsa recalls, finding spent bullets littered throughout the house.

²⁷ Kitsa, interview with the author, 13 September 2019; Lena, interview with the author, 7 September 2019.

Unsettled by the bullets they found at their house in the city and the warnings they received from passers-by on the road, and with the ceasefire now in place, the Markou and Kyriakou families decided to move again to Lefkoniko (Famagusta district) where the Kyriakou family had relatives. In Lefkoniko, however, the Kyriakou family were close friends with a Greek army officer, and as everyone settled down to sleep on the first night Kitsa's husband overheard the Kyriakou family telling this officer that Kitsa's family was left-wing. Lena remembers, 'they thought we were left-wingers because my brother supported [left-wing football team] Omonia, and, okay, my mother was always openly criticising EOKA B, and for that reason they thought we were left-wingers'. Though Kitsa's family had good relations with the Kyriakou family, Kitsa's husband became concerned about how the Greek officer would react to these revelations and, fearing for his family's safety, he declared, 'at the first opportunity, we are leaving!' After three days in Lefkoniko, under the pretext of returning home to collect some belongings, Kitsa's family drove with the Kyriakou family to Nicosia in the Kyriakou car, and from there Kitsa's family took a taxi to Paphos.

In meandering around the Nicosia area, Savvas and the Markou family also meandered between different priorities and different aspects of their identities, at turns prioritizing their local commitment to their family and friends, their political positionality as opponents of EOKA B and the coup d'état, and, in Savvas's case, a determination to contribute to the national defence of the island. Their stories reveal the multivalency and complexity of the tactical manoeuvring that Greek Cypriot soldiers and civilians were required to undertake in order to navigate the turbulence of the conflict. By turns, they had to look to daily necessities like food and shelter, deal with the imminent threat from Turkish forces, and, at moments when this threat temporarily abated, negotiate the resurfacing of intracommunal political tensions. They moved quite deftly, creatively and thoughtfully through a context not of their own creation. Retrospectively, both sets of narrators had a clear sense of what they thought had happened on Cyprus in 1974, framing and explicating their experiences in relation to the ineptitude and treachery of the Greek dictatorship and EOKA B.

Microacts in Kyrenia: Petros Evdokas and Kyriakos Koudonas

In the initial stages of the conflict, the need to navigate the uncertainty was particularly pressing for civilians who found themselves in the immediate path of the Turkish advance near the beachhead in Kyrenia. *Cyprus Project* interviewee Petros Evdokas, a dual citizen of Cyprus and the USA, was born in the latter in 1958 but was a resident of the former in the late 1960s and early 1970s.²⁸ As a high school student he was involved in pro-*énosis* (union with Greece) organizations and opposed Makarios, but also characterizes himself as an opponent of the Greek dictatorship and its influence over EOKA B, and claims to

²⁸ Petros Evdokas, interview with the *Cyprus Project*, available via the *Cyprus Oral History Archive* at <http://www.frederick.ac.cy/research/oralhistory/index.php/nnnn-oral-history-archive-sp-184245723/66-evdokas-petros-male-1958-new-yorkusa-cypriotamerican-greek-cypriot-1958> (accessed 5 May 2020).

have been a clandestine assistant to the (comparatively) moderate EOKA B leader General Georgios Karousos. In July 1974, Petros was with his father in Kyrenia.

On the morning of 20 July, Petros was abruptly awoken by a deafening explosion, which transpired to be a projectile hitting a neighbouring house. In haste he and his father prepared to leave their apartment. The previous day the lift had malfunctioned and plummeted three floors, 'and so [laughs] when we came out [of the apartment] that Saturday morning to run downstairs we said [laughs], "not the lift", we ran down the stairs'. Arriving on the ground floor, Petros suddenly remembered their neighbours on other floors and, telling his father to wait, ascended again to wake them up.

On the ground floor, along with some other families from neighbouring houses, they sheltered for safety under the staircase listening to a transistor radio. Reliable information on the state of the conflict was hard to come by: national radio was controlled by Sampson's regime and disseminated misinformation about Greek Cypriot advances, leaving civilians to rely upon word of mouth, foreign broadcasts like the BBC, and the more immediate sights and sounds of war to plan their courses of action.²⁹ One of the neighbours had with them a pair of military binoculars, and during a lull in the bombardment Petros – who had gone upstairs to fetch water – attempted to observe from the balcony the progress of the battle, and deduced that Turkish forces had likely taken the adjacent bay and might soon be upon them. In their anxiety the group were trying to persuade one of the women hiding with them – whose name was *kyría Elláda* or 'Ms Greece', and who even as the bombs were falling was fretting that she should be making coffee for everyone – not to reveal her name in the event that they were captured for fear that this would provoke their captors: 'the funny thing was that Ms Greece wanted to serve us coffees and we were trying to persuade her to not say that her name is 'Greece' [laughs] and we taught everyone particularly the children to call her something else'. When things appeared to temporarily calm down, Petros and his father went to the nearby hotel Xenia hoping (in vain) to find information or guidance. *En route*, the bombardment resumed, and Petros notes that in retrospect he has tried to associate these projectiles – of unknown provenance at the time – with what he later learnt about the military exchanges in the area.

Given the dearth of reliable information, the older men in the group decided that they should move to another nearby house belonging to the consul of one of the Scandinavian countries (Petros cannot recall which one) hoping that because the flag of this country was hanging on the building Turkish forces might see it as a protected diplomatic space. Sheltering in a shed underneath the consul's house, the party received and passed on scattered updates on the progress of the conflict from passers-by: 'they told us that battles were happening in Karavas, in Lapithos, in such-and-such a military base near us, we heard that the son of so-and-so had been killed, that reservists were coming to save us, and we said whatever we had heard'. Towards evening, Petros made a hair-raising journey to fetch supplies from the family's apartment: 'there was some tension with my father as to whether or not he would allow me to go because he was concerned for my safety. Anyway, I insisted and set off'.

²⁹ O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 188.

From the consul's house, St Hilarion Castle was visible, a strategic position near the Nicosia-Kyrenia road which had been under the control of TMT since the 1963–1964 troubles.³⁰ Through the binoculars, Petros could see the Turkish flag flying from the castle, but from Sunday morning he observed the gradual appearance of what appeared to be Greek flags flying atop some of the fortresses within the castle complex, and from this sketchy information he attempted to keep track of the ebb and flow of the battle:

At one point it appeared that the whole of the castle had Greek flags above it and aeroplanes from the Turkish Air Force began to hit it. I remember that there were explosions from another part of the mountain, towards the east ... And it appeared that someone, in retrospect it proved to be our forces, was firing heavy weapons towards the Turkish forces near St Hilarion Castle ...

On 21 July, Petros's party heard the rumble of Turkish tanks and, by listening to the direction of the noise, deduced that they were heading towards Nicosia, leading them to conclude that the Greek Cypriot forces defending Kyrenia must have collapsed. With hopes of rescue dwindling, the adult men led the group to the Dome Hotel, having heard on the BBC that it was operating as an evacuation point for foreign nationals. The situation at the hotel was confused and the men were uncertain whether to stay or leave, but Petros had spied some Greek Cypriots whom he describes as 'well-known as opportunists, people ... who were trying to take advantage of the situation in various ways', and, feeling unsafe, deployed what he calls 'emotional blackmail', saying to his father, 'I cannot stay here, I'm going home'.

From Petros's perspective, this tipped the scales: the entire party left and, presently, the adults decided to make a break for Nicosia in a convoy of private cars. Someone thought to drape the Scandinavian flag from the consul's house across the roof of the lead car to deceive any would-be aerial attackers. On the road to Nicosia, Petros and his father discussed tactics:

My father and I agreed that if they try to hit us he would try to accelerate and afterwards leave the road ... We know that aeroplanes take a line and shoot and cannot turn to follow small detailed movements [which is] indicative of [laughs] what we were forced to invent ... You needed to be born into this kind of knowledge. We, however, had to work it out at that moment. What to do.

Arriving in Nicosia, the power supply had been shut off for safety reasons, but somehow the lights in Petros's neighbourhood remained on, so he and some other young people went about breaking the lamps with stones: 'it was one of the stupid activities we had when we were young, to throw stones to break things, this time it was useful [laughs] and we with great enthusiasm went about this difficult work for the homeland of breaking the lamps on the roads [laughs]'.

³⁰ Ibid., 106, 188.

Petros's testimony focuses on the things he could control – however minor – and in the process he claws back some control over the construction of his own history. Although at various points in the testimony it is made clear that crucial decisions were being taken by the elder men, wherever possible Petros places emphasis on moments when he was able to be involved in or to influence their decisions (and particularly those of his father), in this way establishing himself as an active protagonist in unfolding events. Not unlike the professional historian, Petros also cross-references his own microacts with information he has acquired subsequently from other sources, thereby turning lived sensory confusion – the sights and sounds of an unknowable battle – into a more coherent history and aligning his own trajectory with the broader trajectory of the battle for Cyprus.³¹

Petros's narrative is also marked by frequent recourse to humour and laughter, a topic that remains understudied in the literature on oral history.³² Both humour and laughter in oral testimonies may function in part to ease the narration of difficult or traumatic experiences, but they also reflect what Ned Norrick calls the 'humorous dual perspective' that arises from a narrator re-evaluating their actions and assumptions in the past based on their knowledge and identity today.³³ Indeed, it can be suggested that Petros's laughter when relating incidents such as the renaming of Ms Greece or the plan for evading an aerial attack on the car is connected to the fact that these tactics were ultimately not required (Petros and co. were neither captured nor attacked on the road) and, consequently, what seemed at the time to be of utmost importance and severity may appear in retrospect incongruous, inconceivable or even absurd.³⁴ To build on Norrick's observations, laughter allows Petros to adopt two different identities in his testimony: one emphasizing his agency, creativity and the meaningfulness of his microacts given what he knew at the time, and the other demonstrating retrospective self-awareness of the limitations and incongruities of these acts.³⁵

Another *Cyprus Project* interviewee – Kyriakos Koudonas, born 1925 – was at home in Lapithos to the west of Kyrenia on 20 July.³⁶ The velocity of Kyriakos's narrative is noteworthy: he is frequently vague on chronology and external contextual details (e.g. how and when he travelled from A to B, whom he was with at different points) but

³¹ On how conflicting political narratives have shaped understandings of history on Cyprus, see Yiannis Papadakis, 'Greek Cypriot Narratives of History and Collective Identity: Nationalism as a Contested Process', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1998), 149–65; Yiannis Papadakis, 'Nation, Narrative and Commemoration: Political Ritual in Divided Cyprus', *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2003), 253–70.

³² Stephanie Panichelli-Batalla, 'Laughter in Oral Histories of Displacement: "One Goes on a Mission to Solve Their Problems"', *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2020), 73–92; Julian M. Simpson and Stephanie J. Snow, 'Why We Should Try to Get the Joke: Humor, Laughter, and the History of Healthcare', *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2017), 77–93.

³³ Ned R. Norrick, 'Humour in Oral History Interviews', *Oral History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2006), 85–94; Panichelli-Batalla, 'Laughter in Oral Histories', 83; Simpson and Snow, 'Why We Should Try to Get the Joke'.

³⁴ Panichelli-Batalla, 'Laughter in Oral Histories'.

³⁵ Norrick, 'Humour in Oral History Interviews', 86, 90.

³⁶ Kyriakos Koudanos, interview with the *Cyprus Project*, available via the *Cyprus Oral History Archive* at <http://www.frederick.ac.cy/research/oralhistory/index.php/nnnn-oral-history-archive-sp-184245723/37-koudonas-kiriakos-male-1925-kyrenia-cypriot-greek-cypriot-1925-> (accessed 5 May 2020).

tends to linger over moments when he was able to become an active player in the unfolding drama.³⁷ At some point before Kyriakos left Lapithos, for instance, some soldiers from the National Guard parked their vehicles next to a church close to his house and were being targeted by Turkish aeroplanes. Kyriakos went to protest to the soldiers: 'I said to them, "come on guys they are chasing you here since you came ... They will chase you again and we will be victims too, go ... somewhere else because here ... we are amongst houses" ... They took their vehicles and they left'.

The ceasefire established on 22 July ushered in a strange liminal moment in the conflict. By the end of the first phase of the invasion, Turkish forces controlled a comparatively small portion of the island, and many of those civilians who had fled their homes in anticipation of the Turkish advance found that they could, theoretically at least, return home, even if only to collect supplies, search for relatives who had remained, or check on property and livestock. Kyriakos and his family had retreated to a village to the east of the town Morphou and from here Kyriakos made two trips home during the ceasefire, which he describes in rich detail. On the first occasion, Kyriakos – worrying about his livestock back in Lapithos and having heard that the Turkish forces had not advanced beyond their beachhead at Five Mile Beach – rented a truck from Morphou and set off towards Lapithos. At the town Myrtou, he was stopped by a policeman who was reluctant to let him continue. Kyriakos reconstructs their exchange:

He says to me, 'where are you going?' I say to him, 'I'm going to Lapithos'. He says to me, 'you cannot go to Lapithos'. I say, 'why? From what we learn the Turks have not taken Lapithos yet'. He insisted. 'You will not go', he says to me. I say to him, 'I've rented a car'. So on and so forth. 'Let me go to get my livestock because if they stay there they will perish without food, without water'. He says to me, 'if you go, you will go at your own risk'. I say to him, 'did I ask you to take responsibility?' ... 'Let's go ... and don't be afraid of anything', [I say]. We went.

The policeman relented, and Kyriakos was able to proceed most of the rest of the way before being stopped again by a Greek army officer as he approached his neighbourhood. A similar conversation ensued: the officer refused to let Kyriakos proceed because of the danger from nearby Turkish forces but agreed to send some of his troops to fetch the goats and load them onto the truck. Kyriakos returned with his goats to his village refuge, encountering *en route* some UN peacekeepers looking for a retired Englishman who lived in Lapithos, to whose house he directed them in convoy. On his second trip, he made it as far as his house and came uncomfortably close to gunfire whilst taking an opportunistic bath (there being a shortage of water back in the village).

What is notable in both Petros and Kyriakos's testimonies is the detailed emphasis throughout on microacts: active choices and decisions that they and their companions made within the limited horizons imposed upon them and in response to broader events unfolding around them over which they could exercise no control. Petros himself describes this as 'a new kind of mental tool' that was developed within the

³⁷ Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 49.

turmoil of the invasion: the recognition that ‘you can find yourself in a situation of total chaos and total uncertainty and that there are ways to survive through such a thing, but you must find how to navigate through such a situation’. Some of these microacts were of comparatively fleeting significance – and, like the malfunctioning lift or the renaming of Ms Greece, are now remembered as humorous, even whimsical anecdotes – whilst others may have been decisive in determining the protagonists’ fate. Either way, they speak to Lüdtke’s contention that asymmetries of power are not necessarily concomitant with asymmetries of agency.

Moreover, the narrative emphasis on these microacts serves to impose some degree of retrospective order over chaotic lived experiences of conflict. Both narrators linger over their creativity, assertiveness, and obstinacy in moving themselves around during the uncertainty of the initial fighting and liminality of the ceasefire and in relying upon their own judgements as to what was safe and sensible. In other words, and to borrow another term from Lüdtke, they home in on their own *Eigensinn* or ‘stubborn wilfulness’ in responding to the power asymmetry they experienced as civilians during the conflict.³⁸ Lüdtke uses this term to describe the ways in which German workers under the Nazi regime carved out brief moments in which they could create some distance between themselves and the authority of both factory and regime by, for instance, playing pranks on one another.³⁹ Here I deploy the term similarly, though not identically, to characterize Petros and Kyriakos’s efforts – both contemporaneously and in the subsequent construction of their narratives – to create and foreground opportunities to operate as autonomous agents even when the normal realms of everyday action had been shut down or heavily circumscribed. Much like Lüdtke’s workers, their *Eigensinn* does not necessarily constitute direct defiance of various ‘authorities’ (be it, for Kyriakos, the policeman and the military officer or, for Petros, his father and other elder men) but rather reflects their perceived guile, craft and stubbornness in achieving what they wanted within the parameters of the prevailing power asymmetry. Put differently, paraphrasing Lüdtke, both narrators take refuge in moments where some degree of autonomy and self-will could be reasserted.⁴⁰

Conclusions

Gkourogiannis’s ‘pawns’ metaphor with which this article began is in many ways compelling: the testimonies analysed above frequently stress confusion, disorientation and helplessness on the part of civilians and rank-and-file soldiers, a sense that their fates were shaped by those with far greater power: be it those close to them with guns and uniforms or the more abstract presence of various foreign states. When I first met many of my interviewees, their potted autobiographical histories were constructed in precisely

³⁸ Lüdtke, ‘Introductory Notes’, 11.

³⁹ Alf Lüdtke, ‘What Happened to the “Fiery Red Glow”? Workers’ Experiences and German Fascism’, in Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, NJ 1995), 198–251.

⁴⁰ Lüdtke, ‘Introductory Notes’, 11.

these terms: after the landing of Turkish forces, they were *mobilized* or they *hid*; they were *moved to-and-fro*; they *waited* for weapons or for information; and, when Turkish forces advanced, they *retreated* or *fled*.

Yet, as their narratives unfold, it becomes apparent that behind each of these italicized words lie entire microhistories: histories of individual choices, 'making do', and both literal and identarian 'meandering' within deeply restrictive and difficult circumstances. In their testimonies, mobilization was a patchwork, dynamic and markedly bottom-up affair. It did not simply end (or even necessarily begin) with state broadcasters and military officials issuing orders, but also involved, for instance, a young man fortuitously learning English via BBC radio, a mother searching the house for boots and canteens, people giving and receiving lifts in private vehicles, and strategizing on the part of individual reservists (and their family members) as to where they felt they would most effectively be put to use. Despite being in a military context where, theoretically, they would simply receive and obey orders, in practice those interviewees who mobilized frequently found themselves making active decisions that significantly influenced their own trajectories through the conflict, in the process balancing conflicting responsibilities and loyalties. This applies to normative as well as dissenting actions: some made enormous efforts to be able to contribute militarily to the national defence, whilst others made the decision to abscond from their units or from specific duties – in fact, several of the interviewees did both at various points during the conflict – but either way their actions, and their rationale for taking these actions, were more complex and idiosyncratic than simply obeying or disobeying the orders of their superiors. Likewise, those interviewees who were civilians, for whom the power asymmetry was particularly marked, nevertheless performed countless microacts to manoeuvre themselves through these extraordinary moments whilst continuing to take care of more 'ordinary', everyday needs and concerns, such as sustenance or the well-being of valuable livestock. As Lütke recognized, it is from these micro-threads of individual meanderings that macro-histories are woven.

In common with the veteran from Gkourogiannis's novel, the narrators in this paper would frequently bemoan and disclaim the inadequacy of their own personal reminiscences as history, professing to be unable, or unqualified, to perceive a pattern within the chaos. Nevertheless, their telling of these tales would suggest that they have more in common with professional history writers than they might imagine.⁴¹ Whether by cross-referencing their personal impressions with what they have subsequently heard and read from other sources, by placing these impressions within broader and widely-circulated narrative frameworks of betrayal or conspiracy, or by focusing on those aspects of their trajectories where they were able to exercise some control or self-will, they seek to impose coherence on and make sense of their scattered and often traumatic personal experiences. In this way, they bridge the micro-macro gap in their own memories, turning fragments into more cohesive personal and collective histories; as Fotis put it

⁴¹ Roy Rosenzweig, 'Afterthoughts: Everyone a Historian', in Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York 1998), 178.

to me, each eyewitness tells their story ‘through the prism of your own experiences, through the glasses that they’ve put on you’.⁴²

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Author Biography

Dr **Huw Halstead** is a Research Fellow on the ERC-funded project ‘Dictatorship as Experience’ and an Associate Lecturer in the History of Twentieth-Century Italy and Spain in the School of History, University of St Andrews. He researches and teaches on public history, oral history, displacement, and everyday life, working particularly on the history of the Mediterranean world and former Ottoman territories. He is the author of *Greeks without Greece* (Routledge 2019) and host of the podcast *Miniatures*.

⁴² Fotis, interview with the author, 5 October 2009.