

Sir,

I enjoyed reading Professor Perry Anderson's contribution on "The Divisions of Cyprus" in Volume 30, Number 8 of 24 April 2008. It contained many perceptive comments and it was valuable to have such a succinct overview of the modern history of, and recent efforts to, resolve the Cyprus dispute, now, happily, about to be resumed.

There was, however, also a good deal of invective some of it distinctly overdone. To describe Alvaro De Soto, the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus who put together the Annan Plan (yes, he did it, not me), as a "dim Peruvian functionary", without even referring to his role as a successful mediator in the resolution of the civil war in El Salvador and his many years of distinguished service as a UN official, is just plain ungracious. To refer to Didier Pfirter, De Soto's legal adviser, as "an obscure scrivener from the crannies of Swiss diplomacy", while in the best tradition of Graham Greene's Harry Lyme, is to overlook his remarkable skill in drafting a large number of complex legal instruments which, for the first time in the long history of the Cyprus dispute, comprised a comprehensive basis for a settlement, albeit one then rejected in the Greek Cypriot referendum. And to insult Günter Verheugen as a "German Widmerpool", when he pulled off successfully the most significant and transformational enlargement in the European Union's history, is trivial. I will not dwell on the somewhat less virulent barbs directed towards me except to say that, if Perry Anderson had read my memoir on Cyprus more carefully, he would have seen that I explicitly criticised Britain's performance in the colonial and post-colonial period; I do not therefore consider it justified to call me a 'lineal successor' of those who directed British policy in those days.

More seriously, "The Divisions of Cyprus" does take an exceedingly partisan (Greek Cypriot) view of recent events. It is thus another in the long tradition whereby non-Cypriot academic commentators on the Cyprus Problem seem to become even more *partie pris* than the Cypriots themselves. The fact that Perry Anderson's two heroes are Theo Pangalos and Tassos Papadopoulos, two men who, together with Rauf Denktaş, probably did more than any others in recent times to prevent a solution to the Cyprus Problem being negotiated, is surely a tell-tale indicator.

What is needed now in the somewhat more promising atmosphere created by the election of a new Greek Cypriot president and the resumption of direct contacts between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, is to give the protagonists the time and space to work together on a solution, to get away from the zero-sum mentality which regards any move to help one side as necessarily detrimental to the other, and for outsiders, including academic commentators, to exercise the greatest care and reticence when it comes to describing and characterising the recent past.

*David Hannay*