

Making a British Atmosphere in Cyprus, 1931–1939: A ‘Coup D’état’ on Greek-Cypriot Elementary Education?

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse the steps taken by the British administration for the introduction of fundamental changes in the elementary education system between 1931 and 1939 together with the motives behind them. The uprising of October 1939 in Cyprus resulted in the imposition of an authoritative regime with the fundamental aim to eradicate the enosis movement in order to restore political stability. Since the British themselves always recognised the centrality of educational questions in such a process, this article will explore how elementary education was reformed during the 1930s in order to serve the objective of introducing a ‘British atmosphere’ into the island. A series of laws which gave the Government complete control over elementary education, including the curriculum and the text-books, led the Church of Cyprus, which had so far been enjoying the privilege to be responsible for Greek-Cypriot education, to speak of de-hellenisation and a coup d’état on elementary education. To what extent these accusations were right will constitute part of our discussion.

Keywords: *Enosis*, education, elementary schools, Cyprus, Church, de-hellenisation, 1931 uprising, curriculum, teachers, British administration

The education system in Cyprus has always been interwoven with shifting political developments both domestically and internationally. In an island with mixed identities, ruled by foreign powers and now divided in two, the education system inevitably became a reflection of controversies and disagreements. Consequently, education presented an effective stage from which political manifestations and interests were ardently projected. This was certainly the case during the colonial era, especially after the October riots of 1931 when Britain tried to retain its supremacy in the Mediterranean and stifle any opposition within Cyprus. Yet, education in Cyprus remains a subject which has not been properly studied. This article aims to analyse the steps taken by the British administration to enable the introduction of fundamental changes in the elementary education system between 1931 and 1939 as well as the motives behind them. Elementary education was not the only sector of the education system that underwent a transformation during this period but it merits a special focus here. The reason for choosing the year 1931 as a starting point is because the unpremeditated events of 1931 resulted in the imposition of an

authoritative regime which completely altered the administration of the island and which was, to some extent, relaxed in 1939 when the Second World War loomed imminent. The first part of the article briefly introduces how elementary education functioned in Cyprus up to 1931 in order to shed light on the background essential to the period under scrutiny.

Let Them Be, 1878–1931

During the first half of British rule, the administration of education was left to the separate communities due to financial limitations. As a consequence this area remained out of the administration's reach for a long time, and since government aid to schools was essentially symbolic, the schools depended on pupil fees and private donations.¹ A *laissez-faire* policy, as Persianis described it,² was especially convenient for the Greek Orthodox Church which had enjoyed the privilege of controlling education during the Ottoman rule. Duties such as the appointment, dismissal, and promotion of elementary teachers; the establishment and maintenance of primary schools; and the prescription of the school curriculum were shared by the Town or Village School Committees, the District Committees and the Board of Education, all of which were separately provided for by Greek and Muslim communities. Indeed, Lord Kimberley, Secretary of State for the Colonies in Gladstone's Government of 1882, supported the collaboration of the Government with the local authorities and he unreservedly rejected High Commissioner Biddulph's 'axiom' that only by learning English would the inhabitants reach a higher civilisation and acquire 'access to every branch of human knowledge'.³

Notwithstanding financial shortcomings, the end of the century marked the beginning of some remarkable progress in the education sector. Nicosia High School, which in 1896 was renamed The Pancyprian Gymnasium, apart from being a secondary school, found a new role in the training of teachers of elementary schools.⁴ Katsiaounis explains that while only Turkish schools were in receipt of state aid during the Ottoman period, the Greek schools had to make ends meet with communal contributions; however, this discrimination was eliminated under British rule. And, whereas in 1881 there were 91 schools, the number had risen to 273 by 1901.⁵ This can be attributed not only to the steady rise in aid provided to schools but also to the growing demand

1 K.I. Μυριανθόπουλος [C.I. Myrianthopoulos] (1946) *Η παιδεία εν Κύπρω επί Αγγλοκρατίας, 1878–1946*, [Education in Cyprus during the British Rule, 1878–1946], Λεμεσός [Limassol]; D. Alastos (1955) *Cyprus in History*, London: Zeno.

2 P.K. Persianis (1978) *Church and State in Cyprus Education*, Nicosia: Violaris Printing Works.

3 G.S. Georghallides (1979) *A Political and Administrative History of Cyprus 1918–1926*, Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, pp. 27–29.

4 C. Spyridakis (1959) *The Greek Secondary Education of Cyprus*, Nicosia: The Cyprus Ethnarchy Office, pp. 3–4.

5 R. Katsiaounis (1996) *Labour, Society and Politics in Cyprus during the Second Half of the 19th Century*, Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, p. 93.

for more and better education within Cypriot society.⁶ From the end of the nineteenth century, education might therefore be viewed as part of an expanding civic society in Cyprus.

Within the Greek-Cypriot community teachers held a highly respected position; hence people who were illiterate spent a great deal of time at the coffee shops, listening to them read the newspapers aloud and expressing their opinions on current matters. Additionally, the local politicians and the clergy also expected teachers not only to support the cause of union with Greece but to propagate this policy in their speeches in the villages to which they were appointed.⁷ This explains their vulnerability to unjustified transfers or dismissals. As for the schools, they were modelled on their counterparts in Greece and were staffed by graduates of the University of Athens. The curriculum and the books were chosen by the Greek Ministry of Education with roughly one-third of teachers originating from Greece. As High Commissioner Sir W.F. Haynes-Smith alarmingly noted 'the whole of the Greek school is being based as an organisation for the Hellenic propaganda'.⁸ *Enosis* – or union with Greece – aspirations were professed from the onset of British administration. In 1878, taking a cue from the cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece in 1864, Greek Cypriots expected something similar from the British and perceived the change in the administration of the island to be a step closer to the fulfilment of their national aspirations. This was not so for the Muslim community (i.e. one-quarter of the population) which, in spite, or because of the end of Ottoman rule, showed an inclination to rely on the British authorities from the start.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the funding of education had gradually become more prominent in both public debate and within the Legislative Council. However, in the Session of 1909 the Greek elected members asked for the people to be entirely relieved of any direct financial responsibility for the maintenance of schools whilst retaining direct control over them.⁹ Regardless of this, High Commissioner Sir Charles King-Harman was unwilling to sanction any further increase in the annual appropriation of grant in aid of elementary schools without an independent report on the state of education in Cyprus. Accordingly, in 1913 two experts, J.E. Talbot and F.W. Cape, were appointed by the British Government as Inspectors of Education. In turn, they delivered a full analysis of the current education system, identifying its defects and making extensive suggestions for improvement, thus providing a template for most British thinking *vis-à-vis* Cypriot educational questions for many years to come. Noticing 'the genuine zeal for education which has inspired and still inspires, the Cypriot people', Talbot and Cape underlined the need for a substantial increase in the amount devoted towards public education out of revenue. They advocated, however, that any substantial rise in Government aid should be

6 Μυριανθόπουλος, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

7 Persianis (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 17.

8 Georghallides (1979), *op. cit.*, pp. 94–95.

9 J.E. Talbot and F.W. Cape (1913) *Report on Education in Cyprus*, London.

accompanied by increased Government control in the schools.¹⁰ But, whereas the Muslim deputies accepted the proposals, their Greek counterparts rejected them. The latter had treasured their long standing autonomy in running their schools and considered this freedom to be a precondition for their further pursuit of political liberty.¹¹

On 5 November 1914, Britain annexed Cyprus without signifying any decision on the island's ultimate future.¹² Neither the entry of Greece into the war in 1917, nor the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 brought Cyprus closer to *enosis*. On the contrary, all the external complexities and upsets of the early 1920s, not least the disastrous Greco-Turkish war in Asia Minor, turned Greek-Cypriot political discourse to concentrate on concerns of purely internal policy. Logically, this included educational issues which again became a reflection of the deteriorating friction between the Greek-Cypriot community and the Government. In 1920, the problem of the inadequacy of teachers' salary re-emerged and became more acute due to the spiralling cost of living. Government's reply to such anxieties came in the form of the 1920 Elementary Education Law which, clearly shaped by the 1913 proposals of Talbot and Cape, made provisions to enable decisions to be taken concerning the teachers and the establishment of schools should the Government increase its financial assistance to the education system through taxation. Additionally, the Boards of Education would retain the right to decide the curriculum and select textbooks. The Turkish members of the Legislative Council accepted the law, saying that without it 'there could have been no elementary education for the Muslims of Cyprus'.¹³ Conversely, the Greek members viewed the law as a government attempt to undermine the teachers and alienate the Bishops who always held seats on all the educational boards and committees of the country.¹⁴ Eventually, the law was amended to apply only to non-Christian Orthodox schools, which effectively brought the Turkish minority closer to the Government but at the same time it heightened the distance between the two communities. Despite the change of government the Turkish Cypriots were willing to cooperate with the British authorities from the beginning, and by extension, were most receptive to educational change. They were less educated than their Greek-Cypriot peers and eager to avail themselves of higher educational standards.

The December 1922 legislative elections constituted a serious defeat for the nationalists and a success for the more moderate politicians. Emphasis was given to progressive constitutional advance and the prosperity of the island. It was in this context that the Government managed to

10 *Ibid.*

11 Georghallides (1979) *op. cit.*, p. 51.

12 R. Holland and D. Markides (2006) *Britain and the Hellenes: Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850-1960*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 177.

13 Georghallides (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 188.

14 Minutes of the Legislative Council, Session of 1920, Volume XXXII, Public Record Office, The National Archives (TNA), CO 69/37.

enact the Elementary Education Law; but in bringing about such change, the desire of the teachers to see their salaries and professional conditions brought under a supposedly impartial Board of Education for the first time, should not be underestimated.¹⁵ Following a six-month debate at the legislative session of August 1923, the Government introduced a bill to fund education which would be provided by indirect and direct taxation, 60% and 40% respectively, and teachers would be appointed by the High Commissioner on the recommendation of the Board of Education. Regardless of personal opinions of teachers on *enosis*, the majority of them resented being 'tools in the hands of the so-called leaders and tyrants and were utilized by them for the purpose of promoting their political views'.¹⁶

The Elementary Education law of 1923 was a major blow to the Greek Cypriot politicians and a setback for the Greek Orthodox Church, whilst it opened the way to the centralisation of education. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the Greek authorities in Cyprus, specifically the Legislative Council and the Church, were not opposed to the idea of centralisation in principal. Power within the Greek community had certainly been centralised effectively during the Ottoman period under the aegis of the Church. But, at this juncture, as Weir persuasively put it, 'the wrong government had been doing the dictating'.¹⁷

Meanwhile, in the same year the Treaty of Lausanne proved a great disappointment for the Greek Cypriots, mitigated only by the fact that Turkey had seemingly given up all claims to the island by recognising the annexation of Cyprus to Britain. Still, after decades of turmoil in the Near East, the long-standing animosities between Greece and Turkey had been resolved *without any account being taken of Cypriot enosis*.¹⁸ Indeed, in 1925 Cyprus was proclaimed a Crown Colony. Having said that, a generally favourable reaction on the island was created in 1926 when Sir Ronald Storrs was appointed as Governor. This optimism, however, did not last long and the years that followed saw a sharp deterioration in Anglo-Cypriot relations, culminating in the uprising of October 1931. By the end of the 1920s, the imperatives of an English attachment and the aspirations of *enosis* among a Greek majority had intensified in different ways. This was symbolised by Storrs' perhaps ill-advised decision in 1928 for the administration to celebrate fifty years of British occupation in sharp contrast to the multiplying demonstrations of affinity with Greece. In particular, the Greek national ideals continued to be inculcated within schools and through such institutions as Boy Scout Troops. Storrs recalled in his *Orientations*:

'There was no definite anti-British curriculum in the Schools, but they are all actively Hellenising. All Greek elementary schools use the "Analytical Programme" as published in

15 Georghallides (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 246.

16 Session of 1923, 21 August 1923, TNA, CO 69/37.

17 W.W. Weir (1952) *Education in Cyprus*, Limassol, p. 87.

18 Holland and Markides, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

Greece, and adopted by the Board of Education. No reading books are allowed in these schools except those that have been approved by the "Critical Committee" in Athens ... Portraits of King Constantine and Queen Sophia, of Venizelos and other worthies, but of no English Sovereign, adorned the walls of the class-rooms, together with elaborate maps of Modern Greece; while that of Cyprus, if to be found at all, was as a rule small, out of date, worn out and frequently thrust behind the blackboard.¹⁹

In Storrs' judgment, even if it was true that in a secret ballot the great majority of the population would vote for the closest union with Britain, it was nonetheless doubtful 'how far the young generation brought up under this Pan-Hellenic curriculum would continue so to vote'. In 1929 Prime Minister Passfield made clear to a Greek-Cypriot deputation that the subject of *enosis* 'is definitely closed and cannot be further discussed'.²⁰ Indeed, a move towards responsible government, or extended autonomy, was ruled out.

Alongside this polarisation, however, the education question continued to evolve. Although the desire for *enosis* was shared by the majority of teachers, 622 still subscribed to a petition to the Government requesting that their salaries should be increased and that pensions should replace retirement gratuities. The teachers also asked to be incorporated within the civil service because under the 1923 law, appointments, promotions and transfers vested in the Greek Board of Education, exposed them to whims and to political or other interests of elected councillors serving on educational bodies.²¹ On 22 July 1929, the Greek deputies sent a letter to the Colonial Secretary to speed up educational reform, and Storrs at this point seized the opportunity to make changes in the education system which would later create more friction between the Government and Greek politicians. He therefore proposed to curtail the power of the Board of Education and subject the teachers, under legislation, to the control of the Department of Education: debarring them 'like Government servants, from all interference of politics' because this was deemed necessary for the preservation of British rule.²²

According to the new law, the Governor would be responsible for the appointment of teachers. The three elected members of the Legislative Council would be eliminated from the Greek Board of Education, and the six members of the Board, so far elected by the District Committees, would be appointed by the Governor. Yet, the Boards of Education would retain their right to prescribe the curriculum and choose the textbooks.²³ By such means Storrs was clearly determined on squeezing Pan-Hellenic propaganda out of the schools, but this did not necessarily mean that he was embarking on a programme of de-hellenisation in the island as his Greek-

19 Sir R. Storrs (1937) *Orientalism*, London: I. Nicolson and Watson, p. 547.

20 Passfield to Storrs, 28 November 1926, TNA, CO 67/2776.

21 G.S. Georghallides (1985) *Cyprus and the Governorship of Sir Ronald Storrs: The Causes of the 1931 Crisis*, Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, p. 253.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 257–260.

23 *The Cyprus Gazette*, 18 December 1929, TNA, CO 69/41.

Cypriot critics alleged. Without doubt, in Egypt where Storrs' Eastern Mediterranean ideals had been largely shaped over many years of service, he had developed a strong opposition to any notion of de-nationalising or anglicising cultures that were already deeply embedded. It was, as he said in his diary, already too late in the twentieth century to think in such terms. He stated his belief that:

The Greekness of Cypriots is ... indisputable ... A man is of the race of which he passionately feels himself to be. No sensible person will deny that the Cypriot is Greek-speaking, Greek-thinking, Greek-feeling, Greek, just as much as the French Canadian is French-speaking, French-thinking, French-feeling and French.²⁴

What he did not accept in either Egypt or especially later as a Governor in Cyprus, was that authentic cultural loyalty or identity should be allowed to slip into political sedition. It was this distinction – manifestly open to objection by others – which led him to realise the urgent need for educational reform in Cyprus. The law was contested by the Greek-Cypriot members of the Legislative Council, together with the Church and the Press. It was also resisted by Turkish Cypriots who, influenced by Kemalist ideas, developed a strong patriotism regarding educational matters. A few months after the enactment of the law, the pupils of the Turkish Lycée, the only Muslim Secondary School on the island, took strike action because their English headmaster refused to hoist the Turkish flag at the school.²⁵ By and large the 1929 law was one of the reasons that led to the disturbances of 1931, but most of all it constituted a major step towards the submission of elementary education to Government control.

The 1933 Law

The 1931 disturbances, however spontaneous, marked a serious turn in the administration of the island. The fundamental aim was the eradication of the *enosis* movement as a precondition for political stability. It was not that the British hated the idea of *enosis* so much, or perhaps the aspiration to it, but that they viewed the movement as depriving them of the tranquillity which was their primary goal in the Mediterranean. The years ahead were to witness the enactment of a series of authoritarian laws aiming to ensure law and order in the future, and transform Cyprus into a loyal Crown Colony. Because at the time it was taken as axiomatic that the island would remain British, Cypriot identities, hitherto conditioning their allegiance to Greece and Turkey, had to be thoroughly transformed. Rappas, has recently argued that British colonial policy in Cyprus sought to inculcate colonial loyalty and social transparency by using a radical programme of social engineering through methods of discipline, punishment and persuasion.²⁶ Since the British

24 Storrs, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

25 Georghallides (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 469.

26 A. Rappas (2006) 'The Management of British Colonial Personnel in Cyprus 1925–1945: Towards a "Metropolitization" of a Profile?', *Journal of the Cyprus Research Centre* (Epetiris of the Cyprus Research Centre),

themselves always recognised the centrality of educational questions in such a progression regarding Cyprus, we next explore how elementary education was reformed during the 1930s in order to serve the objective of introducing a 'British atmosphere' into the island, cutting the links with foreign countries and making colonial citizens out of Cypriot subjects.

Measures taken by the Government to restore order in the island included the deportation without trial of ten people involved in the disturbances, in addition to the suspension of the 1882 constitution, the dissolution of the Legislative Council, the prohibition of the flying of foreign flags (Greek or Turkish), the illegal ringing of Church bells, and the severe censorship of the press. Lastly, with the enactment of the new Criminal Code, agitation in favour of *enosis* was declared a criminal offence. Neither the Church nor Cypriot politicians were able to mount an effective resistance to the Government's repressive measures especially as little active sympathy was forthcoming from Greece, still struggling to come to terms with the recent upheavals in national life.²⁷ But by the end of 1931, law and order had been restored to the island.

Any form of political representation of the Greek Cypriots in the island's political machinery was absent throughout the 1930s as well as the vacancy of the Archbishopric after the death of Kyrillos III in 1933. This meant that opposition to the regime was restricted to a section of the Church led by Leontios, the Bishop of Paphos, and the clandestine communist party.²⁸ As always, the education system could not be isolated from wider political developments. The October riots constituted the most serious political challenge that the British had endured so far and school boys had played a prominent role in them. Acting on the powers given to him by the 1929 Elementary Education Law, the Governor promptly suspended twenty-one schoolmasters for their involvement in the disturbances and he eventually dismissed eleven of them.²⁹ Strikingly, the educational reforms pursued in Cyprus in the first half of the thirties paralleled those followed by the Italians in the Dodecanese. According to Barros, Rome's policy after 1925 was, 'one of religious assimilation and Italianization'.³⁰

In a letter to Governor Storrs, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Philip Cunliffe-Lister, transmitted Venizelos' view that there was no inconsistency in a man having a pride of race, and at the same time being entirely loyal to the state of which he was a subject, and he suggested that 'this loyalty would be encouraged if children were to be taught to know more of the Empire to which they belonged'.³¹ Henceforth, apart from being intended to deal with normal administrative

No. XXXII, pp. 393–422.

27 Ramsay to John Simon, 19 November 1931, TNA, CO 67/241/3.

28 R. Katsiaounis (1993) 'Society and Politics during British Rule', in *Cyprus from Ottoman Province to European State*, Minutes of Conference at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 20–21 September 1993.

29 Persianis (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 103.

30 J. Barros (1982) *Britain, Greece and the Politics of Sanctions: Ethiopia, 1935–1936*, London: Royal History Society, pp. 5–6.

31 Private and Personal Letter from Cunliffe-Lister to Storrs, 5 February 1932, TNA, CO 67/243/7.

problems relating to schools, educational laws and decisions were aimed at ending, or at least weakening the links between Cyprus and Greece. This should not necessarily be interpreted as an attempt to anglicise, or de-hellenise Greek Cypriots as many politicians and prelates would suggest, but as the only effective way to make the young and new generations in Cyprus loyal to the Empire. At that moment the fundamental British position was very clear: 'no question of union with Greece can be entertained and the determination of the future constitution should be deferred until the present agitation has died down in Cyprus and Greece as well'.³² Throughout this period the strategic value of Cyprus for the British remained limited, but they still had no intention of abandoning it to anybody else, and certainly not to a weak power like Greece.

Now that the handling of the Legislative Council no longer posed difficulties, Storrs emerged strongly in favour of introducing a new education law placing the syllabus and discipline of all elementary schools in the hands of the Government.³³ A keen supporter of educational reform in Cyprus, Storrs seized the opportunity to persuade the Colonial Office to introduce such reforms to combat all the inefficiencies from both an administrative and political angle. He pointed out that:

'The Board of Education had been turned by the local politicians into a political machine. Appointments, promotions, transfers and dismissals are regulated by considerations of party politics without regard to the Educational welfare of the island ... Throughout the schools there is a great deal of anti-British propaganda which may, in future, have serious effects.'³⁴

His suggestions were discussed at a Colonial Office meeting where the Colonial Secretary, Henniker-Heaton, reiterated Storrs' view that 'control of the curriculum was the key point and that unless Government obtained such control, the trouble in Cyprus would inevitably continue'.³⁵ One of Storrs' initial and most important steps towards attaining this ultimate goal was to diminish the Church's role in the political affairs of the island, and specifically to reduce its involvement in educational affairs. Beyond the latter part of 1931 it became axiomatic in local official circles that Philhellenism would die out quickly if the influence of the Church could be removed.³⁶ In Cyprus, as in Malta, events occurred which provided an opportunity to push a dominant local Church out of the secular sphere and into a constricted religious role.

That said, the opinion among British officials in Cyprus was varied as to how sweeping the educational reforms should be and when they should be introduced. Some of them were in favour of radical and speedy reforms whereas others supported more gradual change. For instance, the

32 Cunliffe-Lister to Storrs, 17 November 1931, TNA, CO 67/240/11.

33 Storrs to Cunliffe-Lister, 5 November 1931, TNA, CO 67/242/8.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Colonial Office meeting, 6 November 1931, TNA, CO 67/242/8.

36 Memorandum by Sir R.E. Stubbs, 16 November 1933, TNA, CO 67/251/3.

Director of Education, J.R. Cullen expressed his concerns over the intentions of the Greek Board of Education to use all their available clout to follow the example of Greece wherever possible. Cullen believed that only by enhancing the Government's control over the educational system would these problems be solved:

I am strongly of the opinion that this divided control should cease and that the Government should be the only ultimate authority for all matters connected with elementary education ... I consider therefore, that the Boards' deliberations should be strictly limited to those matters entrusted to them by the law.³⁷

Cullen went on to clarify that the removal of this function from the Boards did not imply the immediate substitution of a new curriculum since these changes should be effected at an ordered and not too drastic pace.

Not everybody on the British side shared this more measured approach. The Acting Commissioner of Nicosia supported more radical means to ensure that ties between Greek Cypriots and Greece were eroded, and suggested that links between the island's inhabitants and the British Empire should be strengthened. With an eye perhaps on recent Egyptian experience, where the colleges, especially of law, had been breeding-grounds of anti-British feeling, the Acting Commissioner went on to remark that:

History has proved that the student class generally plays a prominent part in an insurrection, especially if it has been reared on wrong principles. The events of the last few weeks have shown that the action of this class in Cyprus had been no exception to the rule. Educational reforms must aim at eliminating insubordination in this class at teaching the British standard of discipline and that of making loyal subjects. They must mould it and guide it along the right lines.³⁸

To this end, he believed that it would be vital to make the teaching of English compulsory in all schools on the island. Moreover, English should be recognised as the official language, and the books used in schools should be carefully revised and the Greek flag banned.³⁹

Against this background, Storrs requested approval on 7 March 1932 'for enactment of legislation to amend the existing Elementary Education laws with a view to reducing the influence of Boards of Education and increasing the control of the Government over the teachers' and expressed his desire that the measure should be passed without delay.⁴⁰ Storrs pointed out that 'past events culminating in the disturbances have adequately shown that it is essential in the interests of administration that the control of elementary education, and in particular Greek elementary

37 Cullen to Colonial Secretary, 18 December 1931, State Archives Cyprus (SA), SA1/1468/1931.

38 Acting Commissioner of Nicosia to Colonial Secretary, 12 November 1931, SA, SA1 1468/1931.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Storrs to Cunliffe-Lister, telegram, 7 March 1932, TNA, CO 67/246/12.

education, should be mainly in the hands of the Government'.⁴¹ A key recommendation was a reduction in the role of the Boards of Education, particularly with regard to the curriculum, text books and fixing the public holidays. The apparent necessity of such a measure arose from the current politicisation of these aspects. In Storrs' words:

'The curriculum at present enforced in the schools has slight regard for the educational requirements of the population; the texts books are chosen for their value as instruments of propaganda rather than of instruction; days are fixed as holidays which are of more proper interest to Greek citizens than to Cypriot British subjects.'⁴²

Storrs was undoubtedly referring here to the annual celebration of Greek Independence on 25 March. Nonetheless, he did not see the implementation of his proposals because he was asked to leave Cyprus in June to take over the governorship of Northern Rhodesia. He was to be succeeded by Sir Reginald Edward Stubbs, former Governor of Jamaica, who arrived in Cyprus on 4 December 1932. Stubbs was to stay in Cyprus for a year before taking up the post of Governor in Ceylon, and then be succeeded by Sir Richmond Palmer in November 1933. In the interim period between Storrs' departure and Stubbs's arrival, Acting Governor Henniker-Heaton presented to the Colonial Office a draft bill on elementary education. The draft provided for the Governor to be 'the central authority for all matters relating to elementary education in the Colony and is charged with the control and supervision and the performance of all duties and the exercise of all powers connected therewith'.⁴³ This meant, according to the bill, that the Government had the power to decide the appointment, promotion or dismissal of teachers, together with the books to be used in schools, the curriculum to be followed and the conduct of business of the Committees and the Boards. In effect, the Boards of Education had been deprived of most of their powers and would henceforth act only as advisory bodies. Even their unofficial members would be nominated by the Governor instead of being selected by the elected members of the Legislature as in the past. In addition, the Governor would be responsible for the duties and powers of teachers, school attendants and inspectors, the discipline to be enforced at schools, the grants and loans to be made from the Education Fund, and the mode of payment and the assessment of the qualifications of the teachers.⁴⁴

The proposals produced a lively discussion in the Colonial Office. A consensus emerged that should the Cyprus Government want to eliminate *enosis* propaganda in the schools and strengthen its position on the island, it was essential to assume complete control over education. Having advised a few changes on purely technical points, the Colonial Office gave their

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Ibid.*

43 *The Cyprus Gazette* (extraordinary), 1 April 1933, TNA, CO 70/21.

44 *Ibid.*

unanimous approval to proceed with the law since 'the case both politically and educationally for the Government now to assume complete control is unanswerable'.⁴⁵ A heightened fear of local communism stemming from the recent outbreak only accentuated this momentum.⁴⁶ How important the education reform was to the Government can be judged from the budget allocation. The education fund was one of the largest estimates along with the police fund, with provision for £110,000 to cover employment of teachers. The new law made elementary education free of charge, hence making the offer of education more universal. Removing fees at the elementary stage was especially important for girls as poor families were far less inclined to send their daughters to school. This was one way the Government might become 'popular', and enhance its ability to defeat *enosis*. Perhaps it was for this reason that when the law was first published for general information it aroused the anger of the Church and the Press, who denounced it as 'the enslavement of Greek education'.⁴⁷

Leontios, Bishop of Paphos,⁴⁸ emerged as the most severe critic of the Law on behalf of the Church. He sent two memoranda to the Governor of Cyprus in which he protested against its enactment, the abolition of the ancient rights of the Church and the enslavement of Greek national education.⁴⁹ He described the 1933 law as the 'ultimate blow maintained against elementary education' and he underlined that the Church rejected it because:

'it deprives the people of their rights over their orthodox Christian education and their human rights to determine, according to their traditions, the Greek education of the youth; rights that were respected by the Turkish occupation and, for a long time, by the British Administration as well.'⁵⁰

To Leontios, Church and education were inseparable, and as the Church had always been Hellenism's guardian, the new law had to be withdrawn since 'it denied to Hellenism the right to manage our national education, putting it instead under the absolute control of the Government'.⁵¹ A particularly strong objection was that teachers of foreign languages and certain other subjects at elementary schools were not required to profess one of the two main religions of the island, a provision deeply resented in the Church for it perceived it to be indispensable for a teacher to be Orthodox Christian. Furthermore, ecclesiastical control in this sphere was also to be reduced by

45 Minutes of the Colonial Office, March–December 1932, TNA, CO 67/246/12.

46 Cullen to Colonial Secretary, 28 January 1932, SA, SAI 953/1929/3.

47 Leontios' Archive, 'Book IΘ', 'History of Education in Cyprus' written by the editor of *Phoni tis Kyprou* [Voice of Cyprus], 21 March 1936.

48 Bishop Leontios, despite being a keen supporter of *enosis*, was not deported because he was in Greece during the disturbances.

49 Persianis (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 105.

50 Leontios' Archive, 'Book IΘ', date unknown – probably the document was written in 1936.

51 Leontios' Archive, 'Book IΘ', Leontios to Stubbs, 6 May 1933.

the provision that henceforth the Governor had the power to directly order the closure of a school where Church interference 'has been such as to render it impossible for the teacher to carry out his duties'.⁵² Leontios detected in this a British aim to entrench their position, not by sheer power but more subtly through an essentially internalised and psychological process of Anglicisation and the stultification of Cypriots' Greek character'. As a result Leontios believed that the intention 'turned not to the older generations but to the schoolchildren, as they could more easily get emotionally influenced'.⁵³ Both Kyrillos before his death, and then Leontios, advised parents to keep their children away from schools should the law begin operating. But, given the strong desire for education in Cyprus, such advice could eventually weaken the Church's position. At any rate the Government managed to side-line Leontios by depriving him of the right to participate in the Greek Board of Education, explaining that as *Locum Tenens* he was not legally entitled to do so.⁵⁴ The new education law was certainly not well received by the Press. Even before its official enactment, the nationalist newspaper, *Paphos*, wrote that it was incomprehensible 'why the Government wanted to deprive a people with such an educational zeal ... and a genuine interest in the progress and good administration of schools of the right to decide for its own education'.⁵⁵ *Kypriakos Fylax* argued that the legislation undermined both the Boards of Education and teachers themselves by curtailing their own proper professional responsibility.⁵⁶ The members of the Greek Board of Education expressed resentment at their meetings of May and July 1934 in the presence of the Governor and the Director of Education. On this occasion the British officials defended the law because not only did it provide the requisite conditions to teach the future citizens of Cyprus to become loyal subjects of the British Empire but it also contributed to the direct state control and secularisation of education; a process that was well under way and generally accepted in other countries. The members of the Board, in their response, counter-argued that the law deprived the people and the Board of their educational rights. They underlined that it was a matter of justice and responsibility since the Cypriot people make an annual contribution of £130,000 to education and send 55,000 children to the schools so they should have a direct voice in the education and the religious edification of their children.⁵⁷

It is clear from these Greek-Cypriot and Greek reactions that the education law was viewed as an attempt to anglicise young people and to detach them from both Hellenic ideas and the Church. In this there is some truth, although certain distinctions need to be made. Stubbs and his colleagues certainly wanted to create a more 'British atmosphere', but this might be considered to have been a vaguer intent than 'Anglicisation'. Furthermore, it was undeniable that the colonial

52 *The Cyprus Gazette* (extraordinary), 29 May 1933, TNA, CO 70/21.

53 Leontios' Archive, 'Book IΘ', date unknown.

54 H.W. Blackwall (Attorney General) to Colonial Secretary, 25 January 1934, SA, SAI: 1468/1931.

55 *Paphos*, 17 February 1933.

56 *Kypriakos Fylax* [Cypriot Guardian], 12, 14 April 1933.

57 *Paphos*, 21 April 1933; *Phoni tis Kyprou*, 13 May 1933; Μυριανθόπουλος, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–111.

administration had always distrusted the Church but they did not necessarily relish a head-on clash with it. Their desire for more secular control and a shift towards scientific and vocational subjects – echoing the original recommendation of Weir in his volume on educational life in Cyprus⁵⁸ – had a non-political logic of its own. Nevertheless, the reality, given conditions on the island, was that the reforms were bound to put the British and the Church at logger-heads.

On 29 May 1933⁵⁹ the Cyprus Government duly passed what the Colonial Office in London admitted was ‘certainly one of the most important laws they have ever enacted’.⁶⁰ Given that the proposed law granted the Governor complete power over the teachers and the curriculum, putting elementary education in Cyprus on a thoroughly sound footing, the Colonial Office unreservedly gave the green light for its enactment.⁶¹ Notably, the distinction made in the new law was no longer between Muslim and Greek Orthodox schools but between Muslim and Christian schools. Only the religion of each community was stated and not its nationality.⁶² Having achieved this much, the Government’s intention was to push on and introduce a new curriculum.

Changing the Curriculum

The essential principle of introducing a more British ‘atmosphere’ infused discussions on changes to the curriculum based, as Cullen himself summarised it ‘on a comparative study of the curricula and suggestions for teachers in numerous other countries, particularly those of Palestine, Ceylon and Northern Ireland’. The aim was to introduce announcing them in the school year 1934–1935. At this stage Palestinian models were used frequently for Cyprus in the agricultural sector as well as in educational reforms; but the outbreak of the Arab rebellion in 1936 – on a scale far surpassing the Cyprus revolt in 1931 – was to make this particular analogy less appealing. According to Cullen, the main objects of curriculum revision were to simplify the present over-elaborated curriculum and give a new orientation to the courses of geography, history and nature study, besides adding a rural bias to the teaching. No English lessons were to be included in the curriculum on the grounds that the inclusion of a foreign language for pupils with a maximum age of twelve, was educationally unsound. Furthermore, readers and textbooks for the teaching of geography and history would be prescribed (and if necessary written) to eliminate ‘nationalist’ reading matter and be generally tailored to suit the needs of schools and children in Cyprus rather

58 Weir, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

59 *The Cyprus Gazette* (extraordinary), 29 May 1933, TNA, CO 70/21.

60 Minute by A.J. Dawe, 23 May 1933, TNA, CO 67/249/13.

61 Minutes 22 March 1932 – 5 December 1932, TNA, CO 67/246/12.

62 T. Papageorgiou (2008) ‘Η επιβολή ασφυκτικού ελέγχου στη δημοτική εκπαίδευση της Κύπρου μετά τα Οκτωβριανά’ [The Enforcement of Suffocating Control in the Elementary Education of Cyprus after the October Revolt], *Κυπριακά Σπουδαί*, No. 69, pp. 137–151.

than in Greece or Turkey.⁶³ Due to pressure of time, it was decided that the new curriculum should be introduced during the school year 1935–1936.

The local press paid particular attention to amendments to the elementary curricula. *Paphos* published the regulations regarding the history and geography subjects for all the six classes of elementary school, presumably to show that a separate lesson on the history and geography of Greece was no longer prescribed.⁶⁴ Despite initial plans that no English lessons were to be introduced in the curriculum, such lessons were in the end taught in the two top classes in schools with at least three children. By the end of 1934 the revised draft of the curriculum was ready for submission to the Colonial Secretary. Apart from the amendments to history and geography, the British Royal House had been included in the subject of citizenship. The new curriculum also gave more emphasis to agriculture, allocating three hours per week to these lessons, on a par with those of history.⁶⁵ As a result, gardening and forestry lessons held a prominent position in the new curriculum and special awards were given to the schools with horticultural facilities. This turn towards agricultural and practical education was seen by critics as part of an attempt to curtail national aspirations in the schools by directing attention away from the public sphere and as a consequence from the ideal of *enosis*. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Palmer revealed how important a significant revision of the curriculum was for the elimination of Greek propaganda in the schools:

‘Under the revised syllabus history will be related to geography and will proceed from an outline study of the world on a regional basis, to a study of the individual regions in which the geography and history of ancient and modern of Greece, as a part of the Near East, will be given their proper place. Special attention will be devoted to Cyprus and to the position of the British Empire within the world framework. In effect, the anomaly whereby in a British possession the teaching of history has taken the form of national propaganda by a foreign state will be abandoned in favour of a system free from political objection and in accord with generally accepted educational principles.’⁶⁶

The important thing here is the placing of Cyprus and Greece in ‘the Near East’. This identification of Cyprus as an eastern island runs all the way through. Also, the text of the English National Anthem was distributed for teaching in the schools. Moreover, the Director of Education recommended the introduction of educational cinemas in schools and villages that would show films on subjects such as nature study, hygiene and geography, so that:

63 Director of Education to Colonial Secretary, 14 May 1934, SA, SA1:731/1934/1.

64 *Paphos*, 26 July 1934.

65 Α.Π. Πολυδώρου [A.P. Polydorou] (1994) *Η ανάπτυξη της δημοτικής εκπαίδευσης στην Κύπρο, 1830–1944* [The Development of Elementary Education in Cyprus, 1830–1994], Λευκωσία [Nicosia], pp. 215–216.

66 Palmer to Cunliffe-Lister 13 February 1935, TNA, CO 67/259/10.

'They would help materially to break the bonds which have hitherto fettered education in Cyprus by linking it rigidly to education in two neighbouring countries. The addition of captions in English might help the spreading of English in the country.'⁶⁷

From January 1934, Cyprus was affiliated to the newly established British Film Institute, paying an annual subscription of £110.⁶⁸ The English-language and officially approved, *Cyprus Mail*, was circulated free, for both staff and pupils' use, to 80 of the schools where it was proposed that English should be taught.⁶⁹ However, one of the innovations suggested for elementary schools incited vigorous discussion. After the Commissioner of Famagusta noted that none of the schools of his district 'displayed a photograph of His Majesty the King', he suggested that portraits of the Royal family should be given to schools. A similar suggestion was also made by Sir George Hill who, on his visit to Cyprus noticed that the only portraits in the schools and other public places were Greek Royalty. That said, Cullen opposed the compulsory introduction of alternatives and he recommended that the School Committees be left to apply for them. He demurred:

'To compel School Committees to buy and display portraits of their Majesties is a form of propaganda by pin-pricks to which I am strongly opposed. We cannot make Cypriot children English, and I personally do not want to try: if we cannot make them loyal subjects otherwise, cramming these emblems down their throats will not succeed.'⁷⁰

Notwithstanding Cullen's background – being married to a Greek Cypriot – and the fact that 'the idiosyncrasies of a particular officer cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the development of a policy',⁷¹ the Colonial Secretary arranged for over a thousand portraits of the King to be sent to elementary schools in connection with the coming Jubilee.

In contrast to the Muslim community, which embraced changes in the curriculum and especially the teaching of English,⁷² the Church and the Greek press reacted with some hostility. For the Church, it was a double blow. Not only did the new curriculum diminish the emphasis given to Greece but it marginalised the stoutly defended influence of the Church in the schools. In a report initiated by the *Locum Tenens* taking issue with the educational reforms, the prohibition of the teaching of Greek history and geography, the Greek national anthem, the circulation of the maps of Greece and of pictures of Greek heroes and famous public figures, were all seen, according to Leontios, as serving the Government's aim to 'cut off completely any links between contemporary Cypriots with modern or ancient Greece, with their national descent and with their nation's glorious past'.⁷³

67 Cullen to Colonial Secretary, 25 July 1934, SA, SA1:872/1934.

68 Colonial Secretary to Cunliffe-Lister, 31 July 1933, SA, SA1:253/1930/2.

69 Cullen to Colonial Secretary, 14 January 1935, SA, SA1:561/1934.

70 Cullen to Colonial Secretary, 13 August 1934, TNA, CO 67/258/6.

71 Mayhew to Palmer, 21 November 1934, TNA, CO 67/258/6.

72 Director of Education to Colonial Secretary, 24 December 1934, SA, SA1:731/1934/2.

73 Leontios' Archive, 'Book IΘ', 1935, exact date unknown.

In a letter he sent to Palmer on Christmas Eve, 1934, Leontios criticised the new curriculum which he found detrimental to the general education of the Greek youth of Cyprus. He thought that it was incorrect to teach the pupils of elementary schools a foreign language as this would limit their ability to learn comprehensively their mother tongue and therefore understand the ecclesiastical hymns. Politically, he believed that the new curriculum was unjust to the people of Cyprus and asked the Governor to consider that 'justice may be done to our people by the restitution of its sovereign rights'.⁷⁴ The short, even slightly acid reply by the Government to Leontios neatly reflected its intense suspicion of the Church as the ultimate propagator and repository of the *enosis* ideal. On behalf of the Governor, the Acting Colonial Secretary merely informed the Locum Tenens that His Excellency could not enter into correspondence with him on that subject since the proposed changes in the curricula 'relate exclusively to secular education and have been fully considered by the responsible authorities'.⁷⁵ Persianis (2010), talks about the politics of the content in education, meaning the curriculum and the books, and how these were influenced by internal developments and external influences. The British and the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus did not share the same educational philosophy. The former resented the fact that the Church had a say in the formation of the content of Greek-Cypriot education but both of them saw the analytical programme as a means of controlling citizens' behaviour. As a result the Cyprus Government seized the opportunity it was given to finance education under certain conditions, not least with the introduction of a new curriculum. This controversy between the Church of Cyprus and the British Administration constitutes one of the main developments that shaped the content of education. On the one hand the new analytical programme transformed the content of the schools with the introduction of the English language, and on the other the schools' ideological orientation with the revision of the class of history where emphasis was now placed on European and international history, and a reduction in the hours allocated to the teaching of Greek.⁷⁶

In this setting it is vital to underline that while the role of the Greek language could not possibly be dispensed within Cypriot education, in the minds of the great majority of British officials Greek-speaking Cypriots were not necessarily Greeks. Stubbs, during his tenure, had emphasised that the teaching of English 'in my opinion is absolutely essential to stop the nonsense about Cypriots being Greeks (which they never were)'.⁷⁷ Similarly, a Colonial Office analysis asserted forcefully that 'it is very doubtful that the Greek-speaking Cypriots can be said to be of the

74 Leontios to Palmer, 24 December 1934, TNA, CO 67/259/12.

75 A.B. Wright to Leontios, 31 December 1935, TNA, CO 67/259/12.

76 Π.Κ. Περισιάνης [P.K. Persianis] (2010) *Τα πολιτικά της εκπαίδευσης στην Κύπρο κατά τους τελευταίους δύο αιώνες (1812–2009)* [The Politics of Education in Cyprus during the Last Two Centuries (1812–2009)], Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Πανεπιστημίου Λευκωσίας [Athens: University of Nicosia Press], pp. 44–47.

77 Palmer to Allen, 25 January 1934, TNA, CO 67/255/8.

Greek race. The many nations which have passed over the island from antiquity onwards have left their mark upon it and ethnologically there is no question that the Cypriots are of mixed provenance'.⁷⁸ Such views had long been entertained amongst British officialdom and it marked after all, a default position in the counter-ideology which in a somewhat fumbling way the British tried to construct in defence of their position on the island. Yet, in parallel with the educational reforms we have described, such broader arguments became sharper and more frequent, and to this extent allegations of outright de-hellenisation were credible.

With the Cyprus Government seemingly making rapid progress in constructing a reality out of educational reforms, and doing so with a political agenda of fundamental importance which it did little to conceal, it is scarcely surprising that those whose interests and beliefs were in direct opposition felt threatened, and even a little desperate. This was truer of none other than the *Locum Tenens*. In November, Leontios sent an inflammatory memorandum to the Governor in which he reiterated that the Apostolic Church of Cyprus had always been the supreme responsible authority for the lay and religious education of the Greek Orthodox people of Cyprus and he severely criticised the Government's educational policies:

'It should be noted that there is no justification whatsoever for this *coup d'état* on the part of the government because this noble people, being under political servitude, and in spite of his great poverty, owing to his great and inherent love for learning maintained with much deprivation of his own self both before but more especially after the English occupation, the schools of the children and always advanced them ... And caring above all for the freedom of his education he refused and resisted from time to time any interference with it by a foreign to his sentiments and aspirations Government.'⁷⁹

Leontios also characterised the new curriculum as 'a most clear proof that the intention of the Government is nothing but a pernicious influence on the conscience of Cypriot Greek children'.⁸⁰ Referring to the memorandum, Palmer said to the Secretary of State that Leontios was a political diehard who did not represent the present feeling of the majority and that his reactions were unjustified: 'You will notice', Palmer rather scathingly observed, 'that the *Locum Tenens* claims the right to Ethnarchy and the right of the Church to interfere in secular affairs. The new educational policy does not in any way interfere in the religious rights of the people. If it did there might be some excuse for his intervention. But as it does not there can be no excuse for this hotchpotch of political tenets masquerading as a protest against educational reforms'.⁸¹ The Government's attitude towards the concerns of the ecclesiastical leadership, in fact, was to be consistently distant and even denigrating. In the years before the Second World War the contest between Bishop

78 Memorandum by the Colonial Office, 15 August 1935, TNA, CO 67/259/10.

79 Leontios to Palmer, 18 November 1935, TNA, CO 67/260/3.

80 *Ibid.*

81 Palmer to MacDonald, 27 November 1935, TNA, CO 67/260/3.

Leontios and the British was to move to the political forefront. By the end of 1935, the Cyprus Government and Colonial Office had together made some progress towards their aim of introducing a 'British atmosphere' in Cyprus, and side-lining *enosis* as a movement, if not eradicating the *enosis* idea itself. The measure of their success was that everybody recognised an essentially repressive system, which nonetheless managed to secure enough local consent and co-operation to operate with some degree of effectiveness. Education remained a key lever in this process.

'Scotched Rather Than Killed'

In 1936, following the Abyssinian crisis which posed a serious threat to Britain's hegemony in the Mediterranean, London was prompted to conclude that the area should not be abandoned. The Secretary of State for the Colonies declared that the Government intended to face these new and difficult problems and 'make our future position secure' – an argument that was reinforced after the First Lord of Admiralty's visit to Malta and Cyprus.⁸² Indeed, Britain decided to strengthen its Mediterranean fleet and mobilised army and air units in the area for ten months, until June of 1936.⁸³ Against this backdrop, the attraction of Cyprus as an alternative British base grew strongly, since the naval base of Malta would probably be neutralised in any war with Italy because of its vulnerability to attack by the Italian air force.⁸⁴ Consequently, Cyprus required nothing less than a strong local Government and loyal subjects.

At the end of the summer the Governor clarified that there was no prospect of a constitutional move in Cyprus. Even so, much to the annoyance of the Government, the Greek-Cypriot press reported the setting up of a deputation to travel to London to ask for a revision of the existing – although still suspended – constitution. An unsatisfactory interview which took place between the deputation and the Colonial Office resulted in the Office reiterating the statement made by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons that: 'it would be undesirable to alter the present constitution of the central government of Cyprus'.⁸⁵ The deputation, along with the London Committee for Cyprus Autonomy recently formed by leftist Cypriots in London, might best be understood as attempts to explore an alternative to *enosis* such as self-government within the empire. The effort would at least yield a start towards reviving genuine political dialogue on the island after the post-1931 repression.

This setting provided a good boost to the teaching of English language and the promotion of

82 E. Monroe (1938) *The Mediterranean in Politics*, London: Humphrey Milford, p. 9.

83 M. Kolinsky (1999) *Britain's War in the Middle East: Strategy and Diplomacy, 1936–1942*, London: MacMillan Press, p. 1.

84 *Eleftheria*, 14 July 1936; D. Austin (2004) *Malta and British Strategic Policy, 1925–1943*, London: Frank Cass, p. 52.

85 Dawe to Palmer, 8 April 1937, TNA, CO 67/279/6.

English culture. The Director of Education, James Cullen, was dissatisfied with the existing curriculum which limited the teaching of English to three hours per week, taught simultaneously to the two upper classes. He, therefore, proposed that the lesson should be given to each class separately; an idea that would require three extra hours at the expense of other classes, such as Religion.⁸⁶ However, the Acting Colonial Secretary demurred because he thought that such a step would invite adverse criticism. His suggestion was that these three extra hours should be taken from auxiliary subjects such as drawing and music – a proposal that was eventually adopted.⁸⁷ By the end of the school year 1937–1938, English language was taught in 107 Greek and 17 Turkish schools. Additionally, distinguished secondary pupils of the English School, the Muslim Lycée and the Famagusta Gymnasium were encouraged by the awarding of prizes.⁸⁸ Teachers as well as pupils were motivated to learn English while the British Council offered various grants to schoolmasters to study at an English University in order to learn the language.⁸⁹

Furthermore, in the context of introducing a British atmosphere in the schools, the Department of Education proclaimed 12 May 1937 a school holiday to celebrate the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. By this stage it was apparent that the Government had successfully managed to entrench its position in the elementary schools and, to a great extent, pupils in Cyprus followed the curriculum and the regulations applied to elementary schools in England. Michalis Maratheftis, a pupil during Palmer's Governorship tried to convey the existing atmosphere: 'At elementary school I was never taught the history and geography of Greece nor did I see pictures of the heroes of the Greek Revolution. I however learned a lot about the history and geography of England. We celebrated the birthday of the English King and the Empire Day. At every festivity we used to sing the English National Anthem and hoist the English flag.'⁹⁰ Although these measures proved to be quite effective they were not enough to eradicate *enosis* manifestations. As Shuckburgh from the Colonial Office quite perceptively noted, 'the movement of *enosis* ... is scotched rather than killed; and there is always the risk of breaking out fresh if a suitable opportunity presents itself.'⁹¹

During discussions on the archiepiscopal question in May 1937, education again became a key issue of the criticism unleashed by clerics against the Government. The exiled Bishop of

86 Cullen to Colonial Secretary, 19 July 1936, SA, SA1: 731/1934/2

87 Acting Colonial Secretary to Cullen, 31 August 1936, SA, SA1: 731/1934/2

88 Cullen to Colonial Secretary, 6 November 1937, SA, SA1: 1349/1937

89 Extract from memo of the British Council-Allocation of Grants for 1936–1937, SA, SA1: 978/1936.

90 Μ.Ι. Μαραθεύτης [M.I. Maratheftis] (1992) *Το κυπριακό εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα: Σταθμοί και Θέματα* [The Educational System in Cyprus: Landmarks and Themes], Λευκωσία [Nicosia], p. 151, cited in Θ. Παπαγεωργίου [T. Papageorgiou] (2009) 'Βρετανικές Επεμβάσεις στην εκπαίδευση της Κύπρου: Η περίπτωση των αναλυτικών προγραμμάτων' [British Interventions in the Education of Cyprus: The Case of the Curriculums], *Κλειώ: Περιοδική έκδοση για τη Νεότερη Ιστορία* [Clio: Journal of Modern History], No. 5, p. 79.

91 Shuckburgh to Orme Sargent (FO), 1937, TNA, CO 67/281/1.

Kerynia in Athens took the occasion of the coronation of King George VI to lambaste the Government's educational policy. In a letter to Sydney Waterlow, the British Minister in Athens, the Bishop deplored the fact that a happy occasion such as the coronation found the island in despair. He wrote:

'Cyprus, hoping that Great Britain would provide the bridge to unite her with her Mother Greece, has seen with bitterness these hopes not only falsified but also a systematic attempt made by the Government of Cyprus, with the tacit consent unfortunately of the Colonial Office, to vitiate the Greek inhabitants of the island especially by means of the education laws of 1923 and 1929.'⁹²

Over and above characterising legislation to be one of the causes of the 1931 uprising, the Bishop went on to say that the more recent educational laws of 1933 and 1935 had sought to undermine the descent, language and traditions of the island.⁹³ Waterlow simply acknowledged the Bishop's congratulations and prayers for the happiness of the King and the prosperity of Great Britain 'of which Cyprus is now a component and valued part'.⁹⁴ The curtailment of the powers of the Church was to become one of the main goals of the British administration in the second half of the thirties. Legislation would shortly make possible the exclusion of the Church from decision-making bodies such as District Councils in order to diminish its involvement in educational issues; to sort out the archiepiscopal question; and finally to subject the finances of the Church to Government control. In this context Palmer informed Orsmy-Gore in the summer of 1937, that the Educational Laws would be amended in order to facilitate the Education Department in various matters by 'eliminating altogether the ex-officio representation of the Archbishop on the Board of Education for Orthodox Christian Schools'.⁹⁵

More crucially, in 1937, the Cyprus Government took measures to combat one of the most serious deficiencies of the local education system: the training of elementary teachers. Hitherto, Greek-Orthodox teachers received their training in the Pankyprian Didaskaleion attached to the Pancyprrian Gymnasium while Muslim teachers were given no training at all. The instruction in the Pancyprrian Gymnasium was mainly academic and of problematic standards, and it had no link with agricultural science despite the fact that 80% of children attending school came from rural areas: Having said that, the need for a teachers' training college was mainly political. Since the 1931 riots the Government had been deeply concerned about the training of elementary teachers who they considered to be one of the most active agitators. Although the Government might succeed in taking control over the appointment and dismissal of teachers they continued to be a source of sedition as long as they were graduating from secondary schools uncontrolled by the

92 Bishop of Kerynia to Waterlow, 12 May 1937, TNA, CO 67/272/19.

93 *Ibid.*

94 Palmer to Gore, 23 July 1937, TNA, CO 67/272/19.

95 Both quotes from Palmer to Orsmy-Gore, 4 August 1937, TNA, CO 67/273/1.

Government. Bearing this in mind, the Teachers' Training College in Morphou, run by an English headmaster, was ready to admit its first students in 1937. The College accepted graduates from all denominations while English was the language of instruction. In a letter to the Secretary of State, the Colonial Secretary, William Battershill underlined the importance of having such an institution in Cyprus which he perceived 'as the foundation of all future developments in elementary education'.⁹⁶ Here, is not the place to discuss matters relating to teachers' training, so, we should merely stress that despite the popularity it enjoyed among future teachers and the quality of training it provided, it never escaped the attack of the Greek Board of Education and the Church who detected in it a British effort to de-Hellenise education.⁹⁷

'What Are You Boys? You Are Greeks!'

By the end of the decade, although the international crisis was increasingly overshadowing local politics, political manifestations managed to find their way through, not least in the elementary schools. In February 1939 advertisement leaflets were distributed to Muslim schools for cigarettes which bore on their cover the symbol of the People's party in Turkey plus the portrait of Turkish nationalist leader, Nejatı Okan. This, much to the disappointment of the Locum Tenens, prompted the Department of Education to step in. With a circular the Department warned that it was highly undesirable that schools should become places for the advertisement of any individual, firm or commercial product, or for any political influence other than the teaching of loyal service to Cyprus and its established Government.⁹⁸ As soon as the circular became known to Leontios he delivered a rather dramatic sermon:

'I protest for this [circular] in the name of Hellenism and Christianity. Oh! This is terrible for them to condescend and express themselves in such a manner, to make use of their power and to wish to enslave the freedom of small nations in this way. They do not want our children to know that they are Hellenes! ... What [do] they want us to be? We are not Turks, we are not Jews, we are not Poles, also they do not admit us as Englishmen; ... Hellenism had never been anti-British, but always an ally and assistant of Great Britain in all its difficulties ... I am not against the Central Government but against the local Government who thinks that she serves the British interests in this way, why on the contrary, they themselves are doing the greatest anti-British propaganda.'⁹⁹

96 Battershill to Orsmy-Gore, 31 July 1936, SA, SA1: 1061/1935/1.

97 The recently published book, Π.Φ. Ιωαννίδης και Γ.Σ. Καμινάριδης [P.F. Ioannides and G.S. Kaminarides] (2011) *Το Διδακταλικό Κολέγιο Μόρφου (Teachers' Training College) 1937–1959* [Teachers' Training College in Morphou, 1937–1959], Λευκωσία: Βιβλιοεκδοτική [Nicosia: Biblioekthotiki] contains valuable archival material on the College.

98 Palmer to MacDonald, 24 February 1939, TNA, CO 67/293/1.

99 *Ibid.*

Two months later Leontios made a similar speech during his visit to two elementary schools, saying:

‘I am a Greek; I know it and I boast of my origin: my soul is free – I have always remained free to live free. My Greek soul remains free. So boys, if our body is enslaved our soul always remains free and you are free, boys, to say what you want. What are you boys? You are Greeks. Say it once more. Greeks!’¹⁰⁰

The address aroused great excitement among the boys some of whom uttered shouts of ‘Long Live Greece, Long Live Union!’¹⁰¹ Furthermore, Leontios’ trial on 15–17 May 1939 was itself a major political event, and suggestive of the paroxysm it provoked was the fact that when the boys at *Scala* elementary school were left free to draw whatever they liked during their drawing class, the whole class drew the Greek flag.¹⁰² According to the Acting Governor, during the proceedings of Limassol against the *Locum Tenens*, badges exhibiting flags of the Greek Army and Navy were worn by schoolboys in the streets near the court. Large crowds gathered and every appearance of the Bishop and his attendant priests was met with cheering, applause and occasional cries of *Zito Enosis* (Long Live Union). On 18 May, a Greek flag made of paper was found in the doorway of the *Ayios Kassianos* Elementary School in Nicosia.¹⁰³ During his apology in the court, Leontios, having complained of subversion on behalf of the Government against the Church, did not lose the opportunity to reiterate his profound disagreement with the Government’s educational policy which he described as a ‘propagandist formidable persecution against the Greek youth of Cyprus in the Schools’.¹⁰⁴ Leontios remained a fierce opponent of the Government’s educational policy in the years that followed and it can be said that education was one of those subjects which subverted the relations between the Church and the Government.

Conclusion

From the onset of British administration in 1878 and up to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, educational policy underwent several changes. The administration of education was in the hands of the communities and the religious authorities until 1923, however, in order to combat severe administrative inefficiencies and diminish Hellenic orientation in the schools, the Government embarked on a process of centralising the education system. This action aimed at gradually shifting the control of elementary schools from the communities to the Government, and this process culminated in 1933 with the introduction of a new law which gave the

100 Wright to MacDonald, 23 June 1939, TNA, CO 67/299/2.

101 *Ibid.*

102 Extract from police report, 29 May 1939, TNA, CO 67/297/8.

103 Wright to MacDonald, 23 June 1939, TNA, CO 67/299/2.

104 Leontios’ Archive, ‘Book II’, Leontios’ statement in court, 17 May 1939.

Government the power to choose both the curriculum and the school textbooks. The 1933 law was enacted against the background of unrest of the 1931 disturbances and the repressive regime that succeeded them. Elementary education was key to the implementation of this new regime whose ambition was to transform the island into a proper British colony and convert the Cypriot people into loyal subjects, for Britain's interests prohibited anything less. The transformation process of elementary education was relatively gradual and can hardly be characterised as a '*coup d'état*', as labelled by Leontios. In spite of the British boost which the education system received, both the Greek language and religion continued to be regularly taught and professed. Even if there was a coup, it was an ambivalent one – and as such it was fully in line with the nature of British colonialism in the island – always surrounded by ambivalence and qualification.

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