

Demythologised History of the Cyprus Problem in the Past 50 Years, by Christofis Economides, Economides Publishing House (Nicosia, 1993), 632pp.

The book *Demythologised History of the Cyprus Problem in the Past 50 Years* by Christofis Economides deserves to be noticed-even three years after its publication. It is a long and ambitious work, but its title is rather misleading. It consists of a short historical introduction, also taking in the period of the British colonial administration, followed by 566 pages of articles and letters by and to the author, together with his commentaries, suggestions, memoranda and other material on the political and diplomatic events of recent Cyprus. It was compiled from previously published material and at times is rambling and repetitive. But it is saved from being messy and unexciting both by the vast knowledge and good sense of the writer and also by a very useful index that will steer the reader through topics of interest.

Numerous works have been published in Greek on the events covered by this work. Yet the recent history of Cyprus does need demythologising, as Economides claims, because it has mostly been written from a partisan or ideological perspective. Such works usually copy from each other, thus confirming each other's point of view and perpetuating the same myths. Their cumulative effect on the reader as to the veracity of the material is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's remark that you cannot increase the truthfulness of an event by reading about it in ten, rather than in one, copies of the same newspaper. The general view that there are no facts but only interpretations is particularly true of history,-especially Cyprus history. Economides has managed to write a non-standard history of recent Cyprus and that is an achievement in itself. It also does manage to demystify several aspects of the same history.

The author is very critical of the late President Makarios for his general policy on the Cyprus problem and for a number of fateful decisions he made about it. He particularly deplors the fact that the dual status of Makarios as president and as Archbishop did not allow him to abandon completely the aim of '*enosis*', about which he had even taken a solemn oath at Phaneromeni church in Nicosia. He was thus incapable of making the necessary adjustments in his policy when he finally realised that the only feasible and safe solution to the Cyprus problem was independence, and not union with Greece.

It is true that Makarios single-handedly dominated Cyprus politics during the last thirty or so years of his life and this fact makes him chiefly responsible for almost everything that happened during those turbulent years. The author is not of course oblivious to the fact that responsibility for the disastrous events of that time also belongs to the British policy of 'divide and rule', the insane coup against Makarios by the Greek military junta and the Turkish invasion and partial occupation of the island.

The author also castigates the yes-men who surrounded Makarios and who even egged him on to follow a dangerous course thus abetting his inclination

towards brinkmanship. Typical of the way decisions were made by Makarios and his men is recounted on page 45 of the introduction. Concerning a decision on the kind of federation that the Greek side should accept and whether a map should be submitted, Makarios seems to have made up his mind by March 17, 1977. After a discussion on the subject Makarios asked each member of both the Ministerial and the National Councils, as well as three legal advisers, for their opinion. They all said they agreed with Makarios with the exception of Dr. Vassos Lyssarides, who expressed his disagreement but added that this did not mean that his *Edek* party would not continue to support the Archbishop in his handling of the Cyprus problem.

Similar views were expressed by Michalakis Triantafyllides and Spyros Kyprianou but they also expressed their full support to Makarios' initiatives. This was the way that the most momentous decisions about the future of this country were taken.

In his numerous letters and memoranda to various personalities involved with the Cyprus problem, including Makarios himself, and all the other protagonists in Cyprus and abroad, the indefatigable author usually warns them frankly of the unfortunate consequences of their mistaken policies. He is often proved to have been a far-seeing but impotent Cassandra, able to foresee every impending catastrophe. It is obvious even to a cursory reader that the author has been thinking long, hard and clearly about the Cyprus problem.

It is not possible to dwell adequately on such a detailed work in a short review but I would like to disagree with the author on one or two points. On page 23 of the introduction he cites the views of the then Labour MP Richard Crossman to lend support to the view that the *Eoka* struggle of 1955-59 was justified. I believe, however, that Crossman's views on the subject were rather superficial and irresponsible as they had more to do with British party politics than with a deep study of the Cyprus situation.

Also, the author mentions only in passing, one of the most disastrous moves in the Cyprus problem. This was the statement in July 1954 by the then under-secretary for the Colonies John Hopkinson to the effect that Cyprus was one of the territories of the Commonwealth that would never become fully independent. That 'never' had tragic consequences for Cyprus, because it encouraged violence on the island and made people think, wrongly in my view, that that was the only way to achieve their aims. I say 'wrongly' because that remark should not have been taken at face value, given that in politics the word 'never' very rarely means never. In their lack of experience the Cyprus leadership endowed the words of Mr. Hopkinson with much greater significance than they had. The author is also rather reticent about the disastrous role of General George Grivas after 1964, although he obviously has no sympathy for the general or his romantic and reckless policies.

Having been neither a politician nor a direct participant of the events he describes, Economides' 'history' is neither apologetic nor propagandist. It is a detached and measured critique by a clear-sighted and wise observer. One of the

rare cases in which he displays any strong feelings, indignation even, is when in 1992, writing on the set *Of* ideas by the UN Secretary-General he says: "There is tragic irony for Cyprus in the fact that the present leaders of the rejectionist camp, V. Lyssarides, T. Papadopoulos and S. Kyprianou, are the very same people who in December 1963 pushed Makarios into demolishing the first pillar of the Greco-Turkish compromise of the Zurich Agreement which stipulated 'neither *enosis* nor partition,' thus making room for Turkey to demolish the second pillar which has led to partition and the partial turkification of the island. And now the same people, instead of trying to undo the harm they have helped bring about, have organised a *National Salvation Front*-which should have been called a National Destruction Front-with the aim of frustrating a solution suggested by the Secretary-General and the Security Council, the only way that can avert the complete turkification of Cyprus." (p. 500). In spite of these gloomy remarks, the author is a strong believer in the possibility of a federal solution, a solution that can be accepted by both sides.

Economides' work is a substantial, though not fully integrated, mine of information and sound sense on the Cyprus problem during the past fifty years. In the general climate of unreason that prevails on this subject the work deserves to be studied carefully by all concerned. It may even serve to clarify the readers' minds and might also contribute to a fair solution of the Cyprus problem if its messages are properly pondered upon. It also deserves to be published, probably in abridged form, in English. **Sofronis Sofroniou.**

***Symbo/e sten historia tou Kypriakou typou*, vol. I, 1878 - 1890 (*Contribution to the History of the Cyprus Press*, vol. I, 1878 - 1890), by Andreas Sophocleous, Intercollege Press (Nicosia, 1995), 340 pp.**

When the romantic and naive Theodoulos Constantinides (naive because he believed that in 1878 in a place of 180 thousand inhabitants, where most were illiterate, he could establish a newspaper as a publishing business) managed to persuade a great number of Greeks from Egypt to invest in a printing machine to locate it in Larnaca and to publish the first Cypriot newspaper, surely did not fully realise the importance of his attempt. Nor, of course, did he realize the importance of his venture for the development of printed speech in Cyprus and its effect on the modern Cypriot culture.

Nevertheless, the attempt was made, the first newspaper was published and Constantinides himself, consistent with other pioneers, faced complete failure.

Again, however, this romantic and stubborn idealist, after the first failure did not give up. He tried again and managed to inflict upon the many Cypriot opponents what we simply call today a "weekly newspaper" .

The history of this person, as well as many others that followed in Larnaca (like

the poets and intellectuals Theiystokles Theocharides and Christodoulos Couppas, who published respectively the newspapers *Stasinós* and *Enosis*, and of Aristoteles Palaeologos and of Stylianos Chourmouziós in Limassol with the *Aletheia* and *Salpingx*, respectively, and even of Vasilis Michaelides, George Shakily and others who with lesser or greater success were involved in the publication of prints) is described by Andreas Sophocleous in his book *Contribution to the History of the Cyprus Press*, with informed directness and colorfulness.

Andreas Sophocleous has been involved for many years with communication issues and more specifically the Cyprus press. He has searched for, flicked through and studied thousands of old Cypriot newspaper pages, here as well as abroad, and even managed to locate pages of rare prints, ones we all thought had been lost forever.

It is well known that in this "blessed" land of well-being and impressive tourist hotels there is not even a single library that saves all our printed treasures. As a result, a researcher that wants to do his/her job well, like Andreas Sophocleous, has to search the various libraries abroad, mainly those of Greece and Great Britain with passion and persistence.

This extensive work has been written as a complete original project, without a substantial bibliography as reference and without the support of a serious scientific centre. It is well known that the researcher in Cyprus feels alone and deserted, like "Don Quixote fighting with the windmills".

Andreas Sophocleous's research investigates the first twelve years of English rule in Cyprus, from 1878 to 1890, and covers first of all the historical aspect of the period in an attempt to identify its characteristics. It then proceeds to the study of the newspapers that have been published at that time. Specifically, he refers to the following newspapers and magazines: *Kypros*, *Euterpe*, *Keraunos*, *Neon Kition*, *Stasinós* and *Phone tes Kyprou*, *Choriates*, *Enosis*, *Aletheia*, *Salpingx*, *Kypros*, *Diavolos*.

He follows each of these newspapers closely, finds its main characteristics and identifies its political ideology. This is done through the study of the articles in them, the letters to the editor, the correspondence, and all the other elements that are useful to give light to a printed material that in its time had certain dynamism and served certain purposes.

Andreas Sophocleous, as we said earlier, makes a special effort to investigate in detail the life and works of the creators of the unpublished state records and in this way, together with the first newspapers, he describes and revives the personalities that created them. He studies the life and works of Theodoulos Constantinides, a great man and intellectual that "moved" between Larnaca, Nicosia, Cairo, Alexandria and Smyrna, of Christodoulos Couppas, of Themistokles Theocharides, of Aristoteles Palaeologos, of Stylianos Chourmouziós, of Vasilis Michaelides and others. So the book *Contribution to the History of the Cyprus Press* is also a gallery of personalities of the second half of the 19th century and of the beginning of the

twentieth century; personalities that played an important role in the transformation of the Cypriot society and of its intellectual and political components.

However, we still need to stop at two of Andreas Sofocleous's chapters. The first, "the role of the first Cypriot newspapers in the awakening and cultivation of national ideals of the Cypriots" where, with a lot of carefulness and persistence, the chapter researches the relationship between the newspapers under study and the colonial government; the stance they held on different occasions and of the Cypriots on different events, important or even unimportant that at that time shook the waters or were exaggerated for a number of different reasons.

The other chapter, "the first Cypriot advertisements," studies from the beginning the commercial activity in the newspapers, that today has been developed into a complicated and necessary part of our economy. As far as I know, this is the first time that such an attempt of study of the Cypriot advertising was made, which of course, at the time, had the form of discrete amusement.

Andreas Sophocleous's book includes some rare photographs of all the personalities to which he makes references to and even includes in the same section unpublished letters and documents that give another dimension to the study and persuasiveness about the correctness of the conclusions to which the study reaches.

On the whole we can say, that this is a work which is most important for the study of the events that took place in the recent years of Cypriot life. It was completed under difficult and harsh conditions, needed extensive research, and even vision and intuition to complete the gaps and to interpret persons and situations in a safe and secure way.

Finally, the tone and the language of this greatly important work is direct, simple and graphic, making its reading easy, even for a reader who knows very little about the subject. Andreas Sophocleous shows a way to approach the subject with simplicity and certainty, even though its many aspects are complicated and thorny.

One hopes that this work will be completed in its entirety. If one takes into account that for only the first twelve years of the life of the Cypriot press, approximately 330 pages were needed, one realises what effort must be made further, for the remaining 100 years. **Yiannis Katsouris** (translated by Bernadette Sawides).