

EARLY CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE GREEK AND TURKISH CYPRIOT COMMUNITIES IN CYPRUS

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Abstract

In general accounts relating to the Cyprus conflict, it has been quite fashionable to focus on the landslide struggles between Greek and Turkish Cypriots during the years 1958, 1963-1964 and 1974 respectively.¹ Recent research about inter-ethnic relations in Cyprus before the outbreak of violence indicates a high degree of common values and culture shared by both communities as well as a general cooperation in the fields of business and agriculture.² It is less known, however, that during the first half of the twentieth century there had already been two incidents of nationalistically motivated clashes between members of the two Cypriot communities. These encounters were the so-called Limassol-Riots of 1912 and the inter-ethnic clashes of 1922. Wondering why these events have largely been ignored in contemporary Cypriot historiography, this article aims to examine the roots of these early conflicts as well as their possible impact on the subsequent relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island.

The Limassol-Riots of 1912

The Event

On May 27, 1912 for the first time in Cypriot history Greeks and Turks clashed because of nationalistic motivations:

"Disturbances broke out between the Turks [and] Greeks, within the past two days, Nicosia, Limassol, and a few isolated villages. The only very serious trouble occurred at Limassol yesterday, where three [were] killed by knives, {and} seventeen otherwise were wounded. Police obliged to procure assistance of company infantry to put down disturbance."³

After two days the clashes ceased and the notables of both communities tried to cool down the tensions among them:

"Reports from districts to-day show no fresh disturbances [...]. Leaders of both parties were helping to restore order in conjunction with Government."⁴

The Origins

What were the reasons for this sudden outbreak of violence? - The Ottoman Empire had just lost the War against Italy (1911-1912),⁵ and the Italians occupied Libya and the Dodecanese-Islands.

The Ottoman loss of the Aegean islands was especially welcomed by the Greek Cypriots, who were hoping that their Island would eventually be transferred to Greece. The *Mega/i-Idea* of Greece, the unity of ancient and Byzantine provinces of the Hellenic areas, had its counterpart in the concept of *Enosis*, the union of Cyprus with Greece. It had been mainly an upper class phenomenon during the nineteenth century, was propagated and disseminated by the Greek-Cypriot school system, ⁶ and well established among most elements of the Greek-Cypriot population by the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷ Some Greek Cypriots volunteered to enlist in the Greek-Ottoman War of 1897 and during the Balkan Wars Of 1912-1913.⁸

The British Government, however, until the outbreak of the First World War had given no serious thought to the wishes of the Greek Cypriots for *Enosis* since it did not need to win their sympathies or to court Greece's alliance.⁹

On January 31, 1882, Edward Fairfield, a Colonial Office bureaucrat, returned from a trip to Cyprus. He advocated selected separate electoral rolls for Christians and Moslems and argued that Greeks and Turks were deeply divided by history, customs and language:

*"There are men living in Cyprus today whose fathers were hanged by the Turks along with the Archbishop on the trees outside the Nicosia Konak. The Greeks loathe the Turks, and the Turks loathe all Christians. This feeling on the part of the latter is likely for the present to become stronger and stronger partly because the Turks of Cyprus are losing the position of pre-eminence they formerly enjoyed, and partly because there is a general air of madness and fanaticism passing over the Mahomedan world, the influence of which reaches even Cyprus by means of the annual pilgrimage[...]."*¹⁰

Georghallides has rightly pointed out that "this pessimistic analysis of the island's problems and possibilities did less than justice to the evidence of the good every-day relations existing between ordinary Greeks and Turks. In spite of the tragedies of the past, in 1881 Greek and Turkish villagers had for many decades been living peacefully next to one another, while their leaders knew one another, one another's language and way of thinking."¹¹

The British Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberly, however, followed Fairfield's conclusions and arranged the Cyprus Constitution and the administration of education according to the Ottoman principle of *millet* (religious community): Voting,

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representation and school education were organised according to the religious affiliations of Christians (Greek-Cypriots) and Muslims (Turkish-Cypriots)¹² Consequently, the 1878 separation of Cyprus from the Ottoman Empire did not altogether eliminate the importance and ideas and loyalties which had existed during the centuries of Ottoman rule.¹³ As the British occupation found a distinct Turkish community as well as many Turkish Cypriots with varied administrative experience, so it encountered a clearly defined Greek community.¹⁴

The events of 1821¹⁵ had had a negative effect on the relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Furthermore, the establishment of an independent Greek state in 1829 increased the suspicions of the island's masters as to the loyalties of their Greek-Cypriot subjects. As Georghallides put it, "friendship between Greeks and Turks as individuals did not succeed in developing into a significant political partnership."¹⁶

The Cypriot Turks, however, frequently called attention to inflammatory articles in the Greek-Cypriot press, which exulted over every Ottoman defeat. In 1895 the Turks had just cause to complain about Christian insults on Greek Independence Day. For example the torchlight procession of schoolchildren who paraded through the predominantly Turkish Tahta Kale quarter of Nicosia singing about slaughtering the hated Moslems. The Mufti of Cyprus, Hacı Ali Rifki Efendi, also complained of Christian insults to Moslem women and notables, and of Christians using the words 'boom, boom' to imply that the Moslems would be shot.¹⁷

There had also been a disturbance during the same year, at Tokhni, a mixed village on the Limassol road, and even the women were now reported to be insulting one another. In Nicosia, Moslem children reacted when Christian children threw stones at their school, and Greeks in the market-place were heard calling Turks 'Dogs and Donkeys'. In a fashion typical of leaders, the Mufti added that he had persuaded many Moslems not to be present at the forthcoming Christian (pro-*Enosis*) meeting, but probably some would attend, and he anticipated a disturbance if the meeting was not forbidden.¹⁸

A report by the British Commissioner B. Travers in 1895 speaks of Greeks deliberately provoking the Turks at Vitsadha and Vatili.¹⁹ In 1902, Canon F. D. Newham, Chief Inspector of Schools, recorded that when he asked to hear Greek schoolchildren sing, they usually responded with a war-song, 'Forward, follow the drum that leads us against the Turks'.²⁰

From about 1903 onwards the initial cooperation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots within the Legislative Council (during the 1880s and 1890s) was more and more undermined by the "increasing unionist [*Pro-Enosis*] activities of the Greek-

Cypriots".²¹

In 1904 the Greek schoolmaster of Kalavassos paraded his pupils carrying Greek flags and chanting, 'the heads of the Turks must be cut off and their bodies thrown into filth'. Other insults were evidently regarded by the Turks as unrepeatable, for they referred to them as 'indecent words' causing 'precipitancy and boiling anger'.²²

With the rising influence of the Turkish Delegate of Evkaf, Mussa Irfan who, after struggling since 1902 against any kind of co-operation with the Greek Cypriots, became a member of the Legislative Council in 1913, and the polarisation of the two communities, at least on their elite level, became more than obvious.²³

For about a year prior to the time of the Limassol-riots the Greek-Cypriot press had been stirring up propaganda against the Ottoman Empire. A reporter, for example, from the "*Kypriakos Phy/ax*" was sentenced to pay a penalty because he wrote a virulently anti-Turkish article, which appeared in that same newspaper on April 7, 1911.²⁴

This article and others similar which called for the Ottoman Empire to be dismantled and the Byzantine imperial tradition of Greece (*Megali-Idea*) to be revived had, of course, an impact on the Greek-Cypriot readers, who welcomed any news at all which covered another defeat of the Ottomans.

There was a significant growth in fatalism among the Turkish Cypriots who morally had to cope with the loss of prestige and territory suffered by their Empire in contrast to the Greek-Cypriot euphoria which stood betwixt Turkish-Cypriot disappointment.

"The Turks' confidence in their own future appeared to diminish as they realised that Britain, especially after the Anglo-Russian agreements of 1907, was no longer committed to the territorial preseNation of the Ottoman Empire; indeed the Empire's decadent condition had also in practice destroyed the possibility of the retrocession to it of Cyprus."²⁵ [...] With the October 1911 Italian invasion of Libya and in May 1912 of the Dodecanese, the final dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire began.²⁶ [...] Anticipating these developments the Turkish- Cypriot leaders believed "that for them any change [in the status of the island or the constitution] would be a change for the worse."²⁷ [...] Consequently, "the three Turkish elected members of the Legislative Council usually operated in concert with the British officials."²⁸ The Turkish attitude towards British rule "was certainly not shared by the Greek Cypriots. [...] The motives and aims of [Greek] Cypriot nationalism did not differ from those of the broader Greek national movement."²⁹

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From about November 1911 the British Administration of Cyprus had been alarmed by the growing tensions between the two communities:

"Feelings [of animosity] have been accentuated in Cyprus within the past six months by two causes, viz. the increased agitation which has been organised among Greek Christians for annexation of the Island to Greece, the excitable speeches which have been made by the Christian leaders, the writings of the local Greek press, and the taunts hurled at the Mos/ems regarding the approaching doom of the Ottoman Empire at the hands of Italy, especially since the occupation of the Turkish Islands in the Aegean Sea. On the other hand, the Mos/ems have unquestionably been rendered rather despondent by the results of the present Italian war, and many of their fanatical members have become more sensitive to anti-Ottoman displays on the part of the Greek Christians."³⁰

The Riots

In the background of these divergent emotions a minor inter-ethnic clash occurred close to Nicosia during early May 1912 as Turkish Cypriots in Hamid Mandres felt provoked by Greek-Cypriot pupils and teachers passing their village at night time. The official report about the event states the following:

"The principal event which has more or less been the cause of the present rioting was an attack made by some Moslem villagers a few miles from Nicosia upon some fifty students with two masters of the local Greek gymnasium, who unwisely and probably noisily passed through a Turkish village late in the evening after dark. The Moslems turned out and assaulted them."³¹

According to the Turkish (Cypriot) daily *Vatan*, the students had conducted military exercises and sung nationalistic songs. This provoked the Turks into attack.³² *Vatan* had for some time campaigned against nationalistic Greek teachers and on one occasion celebrated that a certain mathematics' teacher called Kandalos had been expelled to Smyrna.³³

As a result of the disturbances in Hamid Mandres a confrontation developed with police forces in Nicosia:

"Some of the students did not reach their homes in Nicosia until after daylight next morning, their absence being attributed to their being murdered. The following night both sections of the population attempted to come in conflict with one another but were prevented by the Police. The latter however in the course of their task met with some resistance, and both the English Local Commandant and the Moslem Inspector were struck and stoned by the Greek section, the Moslem Inspector at one time being believed to have been shot with a revolver, several of which discharged by the crowd. The Police fired in the air and eventually restored order."³⁴

Vatan blamed Greek nationalist provocateurs and called upon the authorities to protect the Turks wherever they appeared in a minority. The paper recorded other incidents in Hamid Mandres where the imam of the mosque was insulted by Greeks; a yoghurt seller attacked with a stick and his yoghurt cups broken; a Turkish-Cypriot high-school student was allegedly attacked with stones and suffered head injuries. Apart from the above there were likely to have been other attacks on Turks while passing Greek neighbourhoods. Finally the Greeks called for a boycott of Turkish goods.³⁵ There is, however, no reference in official sources of these events taking place.

As news of these incidents spread to Limassol, serious clashes broke out between the two communities there.

*"I imagine that exaggerated reports of the events at Nicosia were the cause of the rioting at Umassol the next night, and do not believe that there has been any organised attempt on the part of one side or the other to force trouble."*³⁶

As a result of the news from Nicosia, a Greek and a Turkish Cypriot had a quarrel in a Limassol coffee-shop:

*"The only really serious trouble occurred at Umassol on the night of the 27th, resulting in three being killed, two from knife stabs and one from a bullet, two dangerously wounded, one of whom from a knife stab and one from a bullet, forty-eight seriously injured by knives and sticks, two slightly wounded by bullets. This particular riot was caused by a brawl in a cafe between a Greek and [a] Turk, and ended by both sections of the population becoming involved. [...] The Police eventually ordered to fire on the rioters with the result of injury[...] to four persons and an immediate termination of the disturbance. [...] The disturbances at Nicosia and a few isolated villages were of no very serious kind, and resulted in a few persons being more or less injured by sticks and stones."*³⁷

The situation deteriorated when during the so-called Djoumada-Incident in Limassol some Greek Cypriots, who were alarmed by the ringing of Church bells, started to throw stones at a Mosque:

*"[...] the Djoumada incident, where a number of Christians threw missiles at two passing carriages containing Moslems and one of the latter drew a knife and stabbed two Christians. Casualties caused by rioters to Civilians 3 killed, 100 wounded; caused by the rioters to the Police 1 Officer and 14 men wounded; caused by the rifle fire of the Police 2 killed and 9 wounded."*³⁸

A detachment of the 2nd Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment was landed at Famagusta on June 1 and went to Nicosia, but its services were not required and the reinforcement returned to Egypt on October 2.³⁹

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High Commissioner Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams appointed a commission to inquire into the origins of this incident. Its members, the district commissioner of Limassol W. N. Bolton, Mustafa Sarni Yorghanji Bashizade Efendi and S. Stavriniaki, interviewed eighty eyewitnesses and reviewed the files of the three main law cases, which were handled at the district court. The commission, however, could not reach a unanimous conclusion. Different views were expressed as to the question of whether Greek Cypriots had planned the disturbances in advance or whether they were the result of a spontaneous uprising. Agreement was reached only on the grounds that the commander of the police was justified in ordering his constables to open fire on the rioters.⁴⁰ Bolton and Stavriniaki stated that:

"the primary cause of the riot was the Djoumada incident, which in all probability would not have led to further trouble had not the bells of the Katholidji Street Church been rung to collect the people, and that a grave responsibility rest on the Church authorities for allowing them to be used for such a purpose. [Finding:] That the riot was not premeditated. The two chief reasons for this conclusion being the nature of the weapons used, mostly sticks and stones, and the fact that the women and children of both parties were at the Fair. The local Commandant was quite justified [...] to fire on the rioters."⁴¹

Mustafa Sarni Efendi insisted:

"that only the Greeks were the producers of the Djoum[ada] disturbance, which became the beginning of a serious and seditious event. [...] I feel quite convinced that the wild attack was planned and forethought."⁴²

Sarni Efendi failed, however, to provide any proof for his judgement. The commission could, nevertheless, agree that the Turks were not to blame for starting the riot; the great majority of the accused and convicted were Greeks.⁴³

The final numbers of the victims of the riots were given as five dead and 134 wounded:

<i>"List of injured[...] I expect the total will be</i>	
<i>5</i>	<i>Dead</i>
<i>17</i>	<i>Severely wounded - detained in hospital</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Slightly wounded treated by private practitioners</i>
<i>50</i>	<i>Dressed at hospital and sent home</i>
<i>17</i>	<i>Greeks treated at home</i>
<i>48</i>	<i>Turks treated at home</i>
<i>139⁴⁴</i>	

The following incidents of violence which had taken place in other parts of the

island but not recorded in the official files, were reported by the Turkish (Cypriot) press:

1. Monagroulli village/Limassol district
A Turk was insulted and threatened by his Greek-Cypriot co-villagers. After he left the village with his family for Pendakomo village his house and other property was looted;
2. Perapedhi village/Limassol district
Between eight and ten policemen were sent to the village because of incidents;
3. Aya Andem village/Nicosia district⁴⁵
Stones were thrown at the car of Engineer Hae, Hafiz Faik Efendi as he was passing Aya Andem village with his family. A Turkish yoghurt seller was attacked too and his products destroyed;
4. Lakatamia village/Nicosia
Between eight and ten Turkish families were attacked in this ethnically mixed village at night. The well-digger (kuyuncu) Kara Mustafa was beaten up and suffered head injuries;
5. Perada village/Nicosia district
Turkish inhabitants of Perada (Psimolof/Psimolophou) village south of Lakatamia complained to the police that because of threats and provocations by the Greeks they were unable to safeguard their homes;
6. Lefke and surrounding area
Hüseyin Zihni Efendi and businessman Atanas Efendi complained to the police about threats from neighbouring Greek villagers and demanded protection.⁴⁶

The rioters were put on trial under the Ottoman Penal Code; of some forty who had been arrested, eighteen Turks and Christians were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from nine months to fifteen years.⁴⁷

In Nicosia, where only a minor incident occurred, the inter-ethnic relations swiftly relaxed. On the other hand in Limassol and the surrounding villages the atmosphere remained tense for a while:

"I have been trying hard to bring the leaders of both parties together but have so far failed as the Moslems are exceedingly bitter about the desecration of their Mosque [...]. The vilfage[r]s have been exceedingly frightened by absurd rumours of large bands of wandering Turks and many of them have entirely lost their self-control, but in the villages and those nearby where Lt. Bel/field and his men have patrolled there is now quiet."⁴⁸

The Aftermath

As Hill noted, the excitement in Limassol continued for a while. *Vatan* accused the Greeks of being worse than the Vandals had themselves been.⁴⁹ Some hundred Greek-Cypriot volunteers, including the Mayor, went from Limassol to Greece to serve in the war, and subscriptions for the Greek War Fund amounted to £1700.

While most of the island remained calm, a second incident occurred at Hamid Mandres where the entire affair initially started. The *Vatan* newspaper reported that on June 25, 1912, a Turkish shepherd boy was attacked by Greek shepherd boys from Dikomo. As news of the incident spread, groups of people from both villages took up weapons and ran to the scene. Whilst some Turks and Greeks tried to negotiate for a peaceful solution the number of Greeks increased until they numbered sixty-six. They began to insult the Turks and as a result one of the Turks, Ali Bey, raised his gun and a struggle broke out. Ali Bey was attacked with sticks, and Ali HOseyin Aga who tried to intervene was attacked as well. As police approached the scene they fired into the air and the Greeks ran away leaving their donkeys behind.⁵⁰

The tension lasted until the end of the year. As rumours of impending cession to Greece spread, the Turks were angered by Greek-Cypriot leaders who were campaigning in Athens for the annexation of Cyprus by Greece. The Turkish Ambassador in London complained of outrages by Greeks on Moslems and was informed that the Government of Cyprus had taken effective measures to preserve the peace.⁵¹

The Ottoman Empire had experienced not only the Italian conquest of Libya, but also the Balkan wars, which started in October 1912 and resulted in the loss of Edirne, the Aegean Islands, Thrace and Macedonia. The Young Turks responded to the decline of Ottoman power by erecting a dictatorship under Enver Bey. The new Government could not prevent the take-over of South Albania by Greece nor the occupation of Edirne by Bulgaria at first, but it managed finally to restructure the army in a way that permitted the recapture of Edirne on July 22, 1913. This event restored the authority of the Young Turks even though Bosnia, Eastern Rumelia, Albania, Macedonia and partly Thrace had been lost during their rule.⁵²

In Cyprus, the Limassol disturbances proved to be a local phenomenon, which had no aftermath during the years that followed. There was no detectable impact on the collective consciousnesses of the two communities. There was no practical change in the living conditions of the Cypriots connected with the political-historical background of the Italian-Ottoman War (1911-1912), and the events were finally forgotten.

The Inter-ethnic Clashes of 1922

The Events

In late September an attack on a Turkish-Cypriot family was reported from Pyla.⁵³ Shortly after, in October 1922, following a brawl in the local coffee-shop in Dali, a Turkish Cypriot shot several rounds of bullets into a group of Greek Cypriots, who were besieging his house.⁵⁴

The Origins

Before and during the First War, the Cypriot Turks acted essentially on the defensive, complaining of provocations and combating *Enosis*. Greco-Turkish antagonisms were above all stimulated by the Cretan question, which came to a head in the 1890s. Its history bears resemblances to that of Cyprus in the twentieth century. The Cypriot Turks lived through a period of great apprehension in 1915, when Cyprus was offered to Greece, but in 1917, when they were given the choice of becoming British subjects or leaving the island, only one-eighth of their number left. Others went later, but many returned after 1923.⁵⁵ There seemed to be no real alternative for most of them other than to remain in Cyprus.

The years from 1920-1922 saw Turkey in decline. Large parts of the country were occupied by French, English and Italian troops. Following the Treaty of Sevres on August 10, 1920, Greece captured Edirne and the biggest part of Thrace. Simultaneously the Greek army advanced from Smyrna north – and eastwards, conquering Bursa and threatening to take-over Anatolia almost entirely, thus extending their territory far beyond what had been allocated to them in the Treaty of Sevres.

In Cyprus these events prompted Greek-Cypriot hopes for *Enosis*. Greek manifestations towards this goal resulted in a near disaster in 1921 on the occasion of the centenary of the Greek War of Independence (March 25/April 7). After clashes between police and Greek-Cypriot demonstrators, the police were prepared to open fire into the crowd. The Abbot of Kykko, Kleopas, and J. N. Demetriou, a Greek judge, who were passing by, pleaded to be given a chance to disperse the demonstrators, and they succeeded in doing so after a short address.⁵⁶

Further celebrations were planned by the Greeks in connection with Greek Independence on May 8, but they happened to coincide with the Turks' Ramazan Bairam. The High Commissioner, Malcolm Stevenson, warned the Colonial Office that "unless adequate forces are available it will be hard to prevent collision between the two races."⁵⁷

Georghallides doubts whether the Greek manifestations really affected Greek-Turkish relations in Cyprus and argues that "in fact the British authorities in Cyprus

had no concrete evidence that the Greeks were planning to attack the Turks or *vice versa*. [...] In order to prove to the Secretary of State the truth of this danger he forwarded to him reports from [Lieutenant-Colonel] A.Gallagher and [Turkish delegate of Evkaf Mussa] Irfan [Bey] testifying that on April 6 and 7 the Turks of Nicosia were in a sullen and dangerous mood. Irfan wrote that he had advised some hundreds of them who had gathered outside the Police Station to stay there and not to go into the Greek quarters and he had praised the police for preventing the Greeks from coming into contact with them."⁵⁸

It is puzzling that Georghallides who, in most other respects, gives a very detailed account on the political history of Cyprus, does not discuss the events this paper deals with. When these incidents are taken into account, they strongly substantiate the notion that British fears of imminent clashes between the communities were far from exaggerated.

While the Turkish-Cypriot leaders in their vast majority opted for continued British rule in Cyprus as the only realistic choice for their community, a small group of Turkish Nationalists started to align themselves to the new national movement in Turkey. Georghallides noted that "the only event which momentarily threatened to destroy the harmonious Anglo-Turkish relations occurred in the spring of 1919 when a small Turkish nationalist party calling itself 'Union with Turkey' planned to provoke anti-Greek disturbances during Easter week. According to information received by the Government, the success of the disturbances would have been followed by an attempt at a break-out of the Turkish prisoners of war held at Famagusta and a general Turkish rising. [High Commissioner Malcolm] Stevenson took prompt action involving the despatch of 30 British troops with a machine-gun to the Turkish quarter of Nicosia and arrested, under martial law, the ringleaders. These were Dr. Mehmed Essad, a Turkish refugee living in Cyprus since 1914, Dr. Hussein Behije, born in Beirut of Cypriot extraction and resident in Cyprus since 1912⁵⁹ and Hassan Karabardak, the chief of the butchers and *hamals* (market porters). Their detention was sufficient to prevent the outbreak of any trouble."⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the Turkish Nationalist Movement under Mustafa Kemal managed to regroup itself in central Anatolia with the help of the Soviet Union, resisted the Greek advance and put pressure on the allied troops in Anatolia. In March 1921 Italy withdrew in exchange for economic concessions. The Greeks were defeated in the battle at the Sakarya-river which took place between August 24 and September 16, 1921. Within a few months the entire Greek army collapsed. The Greeks were finally forced to surrender Smyrna and retreated from Anatolia between September 9 and 11, 1922. Thousands of Greek peasants fearing Turkish revenge were forced to flee to Greece.⁶¹

The Turkish victory at Smyrna, which has since been renamed Izmir, was regarded as a national tragedy in Greece. The Greek Cypriots shared this view, because it was a blow to their own aspirations to an immediate fulfilment of *Enosis*. Hill noted that "the disaster to Greek arms in Asia Minor, culminating on 10 September 1922, when the Turks entered Smyrna, caused the Cypriot favour for Union to cool for the time. The National Council appeared to be moribund; at the first meeting after the summer recess there was not a quorum. The shock of the Greek defeat made the more intelligent Cypriots ponder what Union with Greece might mean."⁶²

Hill's assumption that the "more intelligent Cypriots" would give up their hopes for *Enosis* since they would be able to see the benefits of British rule, falls into the category of wishful thinking. Georghallides appears to be more realistic by assuming that, for the time being, Greek Cypriots simply did not see the chance to fulfil their national aspirations. In his account the Greek-Cypriot reaction to the Greek Anatolian defeat appeared as follows: "In Cyprus itself the misfortunes which afflicted Greece greatly moved the [Greek-Cypriot] people, who repeatedly subscribed to funds for the relief of refugees in Greece and on the island.⁶³ Greece's general situation was such that no one could doubt that in the foreseeable future it would be unable to take up the question of Cyprus. [...] The acknowledgement that the destruction of Asia Minor Hellenism had dealt 'a crucial blow' against all unredeemed Greeks' expectations of national unification appeared early in September in the authoritative *Eleftheria*.⁶⁴ It was accomplished by a sad, though unqualified, acceptance of the fact that no power existed which could force Britain to leave Cyprus against its will."⁶⁵

The Inter-ethnic Clashes

Ten years after the Limassol riots history seemed to repeat itself: This time, however, things went the other way round: On September 9, 1922 Turkish troops went into Smyrna and sealed the fate of Greek dreams to capture vast portions of Anatolia. In Turkish-Cypriot eyes this marked the end to a long chain of heavy disappointments and setbacks for their self-confidence (Annexation of Cyprus by Britain, decline and dismembering of the Ottoman Empire). The news of the Turkish victory resulted correspondingly in a large amount of cheer and satisfaction among them.

In the immediate aftermath Turkish pamphlets celebrating the "great victory" circulated in Cyprus.⁶⁶ During the Greek advance in Anatolia the Turkish (Cypriot) press had retorted to desperate statements which inflamed Turkish-Cypriot sentiments against Greeks. The daily newspaper *Soz* commented for example on the visit of Greek King Constantine to Smyrna "that (finally) his head with his crown will be crushed by the Turkish iron paw".⁶⁷ In its celebration of the victory *Soz*

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managed to triple its nationalistic tone by praising the "eternal victory" of their "heroes".⁶⁸

Greek Cypriots on the contrary regarded the defeat, like most of the Greeks in the motherland, as a national tragedy, which accompanied the end of the *Megali-Idea* and at least temporarily the end of their desire for *Enosis*. Greek leaflets complaining about Turkish massacres committed against Greeks in Anatolia appeared on the island.⁶⁹

The events in Smyrna were discussed quite naturally in the coffee-shops throughout Cyprus, especially in mixed villages, where Greek and Turkish Cypriots came together to discuss village, island and world affairs. This resulted, of course, in very controversial arguments. In some cases, however, things did not stop at the level of "academic" discussion: In some, mainly mixed villages, these arguments led to violent confrontation, mostly resulting from coffee-shop brawls. This time, however, the fights did not result in fatal casualties.

A typical and still very well remembered case happened in the mixed village of Dali in October 1922 where a few weeks previously a Turkish family living close to Pyla had been attacked apparently out of nationalist motives.⁷⁰ The Turkish (Cypriot) daily newspaper *Söz* linked the incident to the 1912 riots in Limassol.⁷¹

The subsequent infamous event in Dali has been documented in detail in two police reports preserved in the Cyprus public record office:

"On the 15th October, 1922, I was at Louroudjina for enquiry into a sheep stealing case. [...] Suleiman Murat of Dali shot and wounded 8-10 persons with a gun[...] I arrested him and seized his gun [...] I visited afterwards the nine wounded persons [...]. The seven ones have at [least] 2 - 3 shots and they are out of danger. The eighth one Yiannakis Loizou has seven shots one on his breast, one in his armpit and five in his feet. The ninth one Petris Demitri Zonias is wounded in his left thigh and one [in] his heart, it seems to me that he is seriously wounded but all the other ones are out of danger. [...] I at once Informed the Rural Medical Officer[...]. I will inform you for the above:- The cause is that a certain Petros Loizou Pattoura, discussed with Elmaz Yussuf that Elmaz told the Doctor that he will support him and Petro told what man are you 'Vre' and you will support the Doctor and Elmaz told him that I am only a Turk but I cost one thousand of Christians and Petro was offended. At that moment Suleiman Murat was also present and received cigarettes from Yanco's shop and Petros Loizou Pattoura told, 'Here is another puppy' and he rushed at him. It appears that Suleiman told him something and then they rushed to beat him. He ran and entered his house, he went upstairs took his gun and fired four shootings from the window and he wounded 9 men, who were on the road opposite the house of Suleiman Murat. The accused does not deny."¹²

In order to avoid any impression of partiality both Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot police officers were ordered to inquire into this case. They managed to discover further details:

"It appears that as the result of a good tempered drunken quarrel between Petros Pattoura and Elmaz Yussuf of Dali at about 8 p.m. the former went into the square and shouted that 'Elmaz, the dirty hound says that he is worth 500 Christians.' These words were heard by Suleiman Murat brother of the Turkish Mukhtar and a quarrel started. Apparently the Christian resented some words said by Suleiman Murat and made an attempt to rush him but there are no marks of violence on him. He reached his house and coming down into the street faced the crowd and fired 4 shots. The Police arrived and dispersed the crowd and arrested him at his house. The evidence [...]is conflicting both parties refusing to give any evidence against their co-religionists [...] I am charging Elmaz Yussuf and Petros Pattoura [...] for being drunk and creating a disturbance and Suleiman Murat for shooting and wounding."⁷³

On December 16, 1922 Suleiman Murat was sentenced to nine months hard labour for "deliberate shooting and wounding" and ordered to pay the sum of £2.13 to cover the costs of the medical treatment to his victims.⁷⁴

The Aftermath

Apparently, the inhabitants regarded the entire affair as a disgrace on the village, therefore, arguments about the responsibility for the incident rarely occurred. Those accused either admitted the charges right away or tried to cover up for one another. The atmosphere within the village cooled down and the Police force did not report any further inter-ethnic conflicts.

"The village is now quiet and[...] there is no likelihood of any racial disturbances taking place."⁷⁵

The story of the Dali-shooting, however, was re-told in the coffee-shops of the neighbouring villages for decades following the incident. In the course of time, however, the story has been embellished with dramatic refinements, leading to the tale that one Turk killed seven Greeks:

"If my father ever said that he came from Dali, people would say, 'Ah, that is where one Turk shot dead seven Greeks!' Around the start of the 1920s a Greek had beaten a Turk there. This [Turk] fell down, ran home to his house, which lay by a junction, and next morning began to shoot at everything that moved. This story is very well known and often re-told. And it is said that [he] shot nine people, but did in fact kill none. Then after 24 hours he gave himself up to the police."⁷⁶

This story gave the impression of the Turks of Dali being violent and aggressive. And it remained as such in the "memories" of the Greek Cypriots living in the

neighbouring villages.

In the political field, the agitation for *Enosis* was somewhat dampened by the catastrophe for Greek arms in Asia Minor. The Greek-Cypriot national movement could not even benefit from a possible demographic change through the resettlement of Greek Anatolian refugees in Cyprus since the British authorities, from the beginning of the Greek defeat, restricted entry into Cyprus to persons who were British subjects, Cypriots and Armenians. Greeks were only allowed to land if persons were found willing to vouch for all their expenses. The British administration adhered to this decision with singular heartlessness, frequently refusing even the temporary disembarkation from overcrowded ships of sick or dying Greek refugees. When, in November 1922, in the course of an interview, the Bishop of Kition asked Fenn why Armenian but not Greek refugees were allowed to land, the Chief Secretary answered that the Armenians had no country but the Greeks could go to Greece.⁷⁷ Using the excuse that the Government of Cyprus could not be held financially liable for any Greek refugees, the authorities ensured that the Greek population of Cyprus was not increased by a settlement of Asia Minor refugees.⁷⁸ Between September and December 1922 about 2,400 fugitives from Asia Minor landed in Cyprus – 200 British subjects, 800 Cypriots, 500 Armenians and 900 Greeks.⁷⁹

The Greek-Cypriot leadership tried to overcome the Anatolian shock by changing its short-run policy. A Memorandum was presented on December 16, 1922 by the Archbishop on behalf of the National Council to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in which fairly extensive demands were put forward: for full self-government, participation of Turks as well as Greeks in not only the Legislative but the Executive Council and the Administration, in proportion to their numbers in the population. But the High Commissioner was to be allowed to retain his veto in the Legislative Council. BO Against these demands a Turkish Deputy, Dr Eyyub, presented petitions from Moslem communities and villages, pressing for – among other things – the restoration of Cyprus to the Ottoman Empire or return to the pre-annexation system. They also asked for a Moslem Council to exercise control over the Sheri [Shari'a] Court, Muslim education and the Evkaf, and opposed the grant of extended constitutional powers to the native inhabitants.⁸¹ These demands could not, the High Commissioner thought, be considered seriously. Nevertheless, in December 1922 the Moslems despatched a delegation to Ankara to press for the return of the island to Turkey.⁸²

Hill noted that "The reaction against the extremists was plainly seen at the next elections. In spite of the efforts of the National Council to engineer a boycott, no less than fourteen candidates were nominated for seven non-Moslem seats, and ten of them were agriculturists or villagers. Of the seven Greek Christians elected,

three were farmers, two farmer-traders, one a motor-car agent and one a tobacco-factory manager. There were also two Maronites.⁸³ The result was a shock to the National Council. When in the reply to the High Commissioner's opening speech the usual attempt was made to include a paragraph in favour of Union with Greece, four Greek Christians voted against it. They had come to the council, they said, not to agitate for Union, but to work for the good of the island."⁸⁴

Daily life between the ethnic groups in villages involved in the disturbances of 1922, nevertheless, remained unchanged. The events were regarded as having brought disgrace and dishonour to these villages, they were not mentioned anymore and discussions on Greek-Turkish conflict were shunned. Further quarrels on this issue were thus avoided. But it marked also a certain change in the way that opinions were formed within the ethnic villages of Cyprus. Greek and Turkish Cypriots started to discuss vital political issues first and foremost amongst themselves, before they conferred on issues with the "other side".⁸⁵

Thus, the conflict of 1922 did not poison the atmosphere between the two communities and cannot, therefore, be compared with the far more violent fights of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. However, it brought about a significant change in the communication structures that influenced different national self-consciousnesses as well.⁸⁶

Conclusion

Both events of 1912 and 1922 proved to be isolated incidents without serious repercussions for the further political developments in the history of Cyprus. The fact that they have not been referred to in most of the historiography on Cyprus might lead to the conclusion that they are insignificant. On the other hand, it might be argued that Greek-Cypriot historiography has always underestimated the degree of dislike between the nationalists of the two communities.⁸⁷ But, even Turkish-Cypriot works on the History of Cyprus do not particularly stress the importance of these events.

The only valid assumption is that while the life of the people in Greece, the Balkans and Anatolia were heavily and directly effected by the Balkan wars of both 1912 and 1921-1922 (i.e., Military service, displacement, economic repercussions), the Cypriots "fought" these wars by reading newspapers. Their daily lives continued undisturbed and neither "*Enosis*" nor return to Ottoman rule was feasible. This explains why the clashes in Limassol and Dali did not incite further fighting. They were more the results of over-heated national feelings rather than expressions of genuine will for immediate change. Calls for revenge were not heard since the numbers of victims were limited. However, the absence of violence in the years

EARLY CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE GREEK AND TURKISH CYPRIOT COMMUNITIES

following should not be misjudged: Both events clearly indicate the damaging influence nationalism has already had on both communities during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Subsequent developments in Cyprus, including the 1931 Greek-Cypriot uprising, did not include anti-Turkish elements. As a consequence there has been no repetition of intercommunal violence until the late 1950s when the Greek-Cypriot dream of *Enosis* was perceived as a threat by Turkish-Cypriots.

Notes

1. See fx. Crawshaw, Nancy (1978) *The Cyprus Revolt*, London; Battle, L. and Williams, D. (1974) *Cyprus. A Decade of Crisis*, Washington; Markides, K. C. (1977) *The Rise and Fall of the Cyprus Republic*, London.
2. Asmussen, Jan (2001) *'Wir waren wie Bruder'. Zusammenleben und Konfliktentstehung in ethnisch gemischten Dörfern auf Zypern*, Hamburg, Lit-Verlag.
3. CO 67/166 High Commissioner Goold-Adams to Secretary of State for the Colonies Lewis Harcourt, 28 May 1912.
4. CO 67/166 Goold-Adams to Harcourt, 29 May 1912.
5. The Italians had secured their interest in Libya by contracts with France in 1900, 1902 and 1911 and forced the Ottoman Empire to agree to a treaty that put Libya under an Italian Protectorate. Grunebaum, van G. E. (ed.), (1998) *Der Islam II. Die islamischen Reiche nach dem Fall von Konstantinopel*, Augsburg, Weltbild Verlag, pp. 406-410.
6. The disastrous effects of the divided educational system were emphasised by Kitromilides and Couloumbis; Kitromilides, Paschalis M. and Couloumbis, Theodore A. (1976) 'Ethnic Conflict in a Strategic Area. The Case of Cyprus' in Said Abdul and Simmons, Luiz R. (ed.), *Ethnicity in an International Context*, New Brunswick, p. 170.
7. See Katsiaounis, Rolandos {1996} *Labour, Society and Politics in Cyprus During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Nicosia.
8. Georghallides, G. S. (1979) *A Political and Administrative History of Cyprus 1918-1926. With a SuNey of the Foundations of British Rule*, Nicosia, Cyprus Research Centre, p. 81.
9. Ibid., op. cit., p. 14.
10. CO 67/21 Minute by E. Fairfield, 31 January 1882.
11. Ibid., p. 46.
12. Ibid., pp. 46-52.
13. Ibid., p. 52.
14. Ibid., p. 54.
15. The executions of the Archbishop and about 500 leading clerical and lay members of the Greek-Cypriot society in July 1821 were carried out on the grounds of alleged

collaboration with the Greek Revolution.

16. Georghallides, op. cit., p. 55.
17. Purcell, H. D. (1969) *Cyprus*. London, p. 238.
18. 18. C.O.67/91, **3 May** 1895.
19. Purcell, op. cit., p. 238.
20. Ibid., p. 239.
21. Georghallides, p. 75.
22. Purcell, op. cit., p. 239.
23. Georghallides, p. 75.
24. Hill, George (1940-52) *The History of Cyprus*, Vol. 4, Cambridge, p. 518.
25. Georghallides, op. cit., p. 76.
26. Ibid., p. 76.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 80.
30. CO 67/166 Goold-Adams to Harcourt, 30 May 1912.
31. Ibid.
32. *Vatan*, 27 May 1912.
33. *Vatan*, 12 May 1912.
34. CO 67/166 Goold-Adams to Harcourt, 30 May 1912.
35. Harid Fedai in: *Yeni Ktbts*, June 1985, p. 15.
36. CO 67/166 Goold-Adams to Harcourt, 30 May 1912.
37. CO 67/166 Goold-Adams to Harcourt, 30 May 1912.
38. CO 67/167 Goold-Adams to Harcourt, 2 August 1912.
39. Hill, op. cit., p. 519.
40. "The local Commandant was quite justified[...] to fire on the rioters. [...] the rioters were all Christians attacking Moslems." CO 67/167 Finding Bolton and Sarni Efendi, 2 July 1912; W. N. Bolton, Commissioner, Limassol to C.S., 3 July 1912.
41. CO 67/167 Finding Bolton and S. Stavrinakis, 2 July 1912.
42. CO 67/167 Mustafa Sarni Yorghanji Bashizade to H.C., 3 July 1912.
43. Hill, op. cit., p. 519, footnote 1.
44. CO 67/166 W. N. Bolton, Commissioner, Limassol to C.S., 2 June 1912.
45. The case was referred to in the Turkish press. It is unclear which village was meant by "Aya Andem".
46. Sabahattin ismail: *Turk-Rum iliskileri ve ilk Turk-Rum Kavgalart* [Turkish-Greek relations under British administration and first Turkish-Greek quarrels]. Lefka 1997, pp. 196-97.
47. Hill, op. cit., p. 519.
48. CO 67/166 W. N. Bolton, Commissioner, Limassol to C.S., 2 June 1912.
49. 'Afrika vah ilerinden daha vahgi' [They are more vandals than African Vandals].
Headline: '1912 Senesi Vah ileri' [The Vandals of the year 1912], *Vatan*, 3 June 1912.
50. *Vatan*, 1 July 1912.

51. Hill, op. cit., p. 519, footnote 2.
52. Ibid., pp. 142-143.
53. SA1/1064/1922 Disturbances at Pyla.
54. SA1/1149/1922 Disturbances between Greeks and Turks at Dali; Sava Eleftheriou, Sgt. 2362 to Local Commandant of Police, Nicosia, 16 October 1922.
55. Purcell, op. cit., p. 241.
56. CO 67/202 Confidential, Stevenson to Churchill, 13 April and 25 April 1921.
57. CO 67/202 Telegram, Stevenson to Churchill, 23 April 1921.
58. Georghallides, op. cit., pp. 191-192; CO 67/202 Gallagher to Fenn, 9 April and 23 April 1921; Irfan to Fenn, 11 April 1921.
59. Dr. Behije was sentenced to death and hanged for the murder of his wife on 24 June 1924; *Eleftheria*, 14 May and 25 June 1924.
60. Georghallides, op. cit., pp. 178-179; CO 67/191 Secret, Stevenson to Milner, 26 April 1919; CO 67/191 Secret, Stevenson to Milner, 6 May 1919.
61. Grunebaum, van G. E. (ed.), (1998) *Der Islam II. Die islamischen Reiche nach dem Fall von Konstantinopel*, Augsburg, Weltbild Verlag, pp. 145-47.
62. Hill, op. cit., p. 537.
63. *Eleftheria*, September to December 1922 passim.
64. *Eleftheria*, 9 September and 13 September 1922.
65. *Eleftheria*, 9 September/16 September and 7 October 1922; Georghallides, op. cit., p. 222.
66. SA1/1145/22 Political agitation by Moslems; the file is listed in the register of correspondence, but is indicated as "wanting" i.e., not accessible in the Cyprus Public Record Office.
67. 'Konstantin'in taçlı başı Türkün demir pençesi altında ezilecektir'; an article titled: Gordian knot- Gordian Düğümü, *Söz*, July 1921.
68. 'Bahri Sefidin hasin dalgaları arasında sıkışmış ve her gün mahzun göylere Anadolu'dan bir zafer, bir memlektin Türk ruhlarından, bin saygı o kahramanlara' [From the Turkish souls of one country squeezed by the violent waves of Bahri Sefidin, it looks at Anatolia every day with sad eyes and awaits an eternal victory. Thousands of tributes to those heroes!], M. R. Okan in *Söz*, 29 July 1922.
69. SA1/1289/22 Massacre (in Turkey) Greek Leaflets.
70. SA1/1064/1922 Disturbances at Pyla.
71. 'On sane önce meydana gelen ve birkaç masum Türkün kurban gitmesi ile sonuçlanan kıyım da, Rum terbiye ve seciyesine bir örnek teşkil eder...', [The slaughter which took place ten years ago that ended with the sacrifice of a few innocent Turks is a good example of Greek training of good manners and characters...] *Söz*, 30 September 1912.
72. SA1/1149/1922 Disturbances between Greeks and Turks at Dali; Sava Eleftheriou, Sgt. 2362 to Local Commandant of Police, Nicosia, 16 October 1922.
73. SA1/1149/1922 B. J. Surridge, Local Commandant of Police, Nicosia to Chief Commandant of Police, 21 October 1922.
74. SA1/1149/1922 Chief Commandant of Police to Chief Secretary, 2 January 1923.

75. SA1/1149/1922 B. J. SurrIDGE, Local Commandant of Police, Nicosia to Chief Commandant of Police, 21 October 1922.

76. Interview with a 47-year old Greek Cypriot from Dali.

77. *Eleftheria*, 22 November 1922.

78. Georghallides, op. cit., p. 231, footnote 1.

79. HMSO (Ed.): No. 1159. Cyprus. Report for 1922, London 1923, p. 8. 80. Ibid., p. 426.

81. Ibid., p. 537, footnote 3.

82. Ibid., p. 538, footnote 1.

83. See Lysiotis, Marios (1990) 'The Legislative Council', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 55-69.

84. Ibid., p. 538.

85. Asmussen, op. cit., p. 185.

86. The worsening of the Turko-Greek relationship, which suffered through the forced exchange of population, had its repercussions in Cyprus. Anti-Turkish sentiments were transported to the island through the use of Greek textbooks in Greek-Cypriot Schools; Asmussen, op. cit., p. 110.

87. "The fact is that most Greek-Cypriot writers have failed to discuss these incidents. There can be only three explanations. The first would be ignorance, because they have not examined the relevant sources. The second could be conscious bias - an unwillingness to pay sufficient attention to cognitively disturbing material which does not fit, and indeed irritates a pre-existing mind set. The third is a failure to give due weight to events, through unconscious mind sets. Many Greek-Cypriot commentators might try to argue that these events were of minor significance only, involved only handfuls of fanatics, and do not add up to a serious obstacle to the view that the two communities got on well. I do not take any of these views. It has always been a weakness of Greek-Cypriot historiography that it underestimated the degree of dislike between the nationalists of the two communities, and failed to note how often the Christian nationalists sought opportunities to insult the Muslims;" Referee comment on this manuscript, 3rd February 2004.