

Imperial Control in Cyprus: Education and Political Manipulation in the British Empire

ANTIGONE HERACLIDOU

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Antigone Heraclidou's important study explores the way with which political developments in colonial Cyprus impacted upon the evolution of the education system. This is the first book to explore this dimension of education under the British. Heraclidou charts the British efforts to reform the education system on the island, giving emphasis to the post-1931 period. Such efforts, she argues, aimed primarily at introducing a British atmosphere on the island, thus making the younger Cypriot generations loyal to the British Empire. This in turn would secure Britain's leading position in the Mediterranean and the Near East, especially after the end of the Second World War. The book demonstrates how such endeavors were eventually unsuccessful: The British failed to penetrate Greek Cypriot society as exemplified by the mass participation of the youth in the EOKA revolt in the latter part of the 1950s.

The author initially sets the historical background from the arrival of the British on the island, in 1878, until the onset of the 1931 October revolt. Upon their arrival, the British were met with demands for union with Greece, although those were put forward – at least until 1931 – in a peaceful fashion. The book shows how education eventually became a platform for the supporters of enosis. Simultaneously, financial restraints were also at the heart of educational policy. The Tribute, as well as other heavy taxation, remained for many years a critical problem between the Cypriots and the British. Financial limitations meant that the administration of education was left to local communities and religious authorities; here the role of the institution of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, which traditionally controlled education (a privilege it had enjoyed under Ottoman rule), was critical. The author explains how during this period, education gradually entered a centralization process; one that the British would fully implement during the 1930s.

Following the quick suppression of the 1931 revolt, the British imposed on the island a repressive policy; in Greek Cypriot historiography, this period is known as Palmerocracy. During this phase education was seriously affected as the colonial government sought to assume greater control over it. The British goal was the eradication of the enosis movement and the subsequent transformation of the island into a loyal Crown Colony. The book discusses the education laws of the 1930s which aimed at ending or at least weakening the links between Cyprus and Greece. Indeed,

with two laws enacted in 1933 and 1935, the British gained complete control over elementary education (including the curriculum and the selection of textbooks) while they also managed to have a degree of supervision over secondary education determined by the provision of financial aid. The author shows how the British met fierce reaction of the Locum Tenens of the Archiepiscopal See, Leontios. Indeed, following the experience of 1931, it was axiomatic in local official British circles that the role of the Orthodox Church in politics should be reduced and this concerned also the institution's involvement in educational matters. By curtailing the influence of the Church, the British believed Philhellenism in Cyprus would die. For Leontios, Church and education were inseparable, especially as the religious institution had always been the guardian of Hellenism and the higher educational authority for Greek Cypriots.

Other British educational reforms which were pursued during the 1930s included, *inter alia*, the introduction and dissemination of the English language, the development of the English School (established in 1901) into a government school and the advancement of rural education. It was Palmer's belief that such reforms would enhance loyalty towards Britain and that a 'British' system of education was a precondition for any return to representative life which was halted after 1931. We learn other plans for reform included talks for the establishment of a university in Cyprus, although in the end such a prospect did not materialize due to financial restrictions. By the end of the decade, amidst critical regional and international developments, Palmerocracy gradually ran out of steam, although reforms in education remained at its heart until its end. By then, the author stresses, this type of administration only increased mistrust and suspicion between the Greeks of Cyprus and the British. Allegations for the de-Hellenization of Cyprus remained at the core of such critique, although – as Heraclidou rightly points out – the British never had any such intentions.

The outbreak of the Second World War, especially Greece's entry in 1940, witnessed the revival of the enosis movement with all its old vigor. Cypriot contribution in the war on the side of the British was remarkable and this resulted in a relaxation of measures adopted during the post-1931 regime. The war further saw the remaking of Cypriot politics, including the founding of new parties, most prominently AKEL. War conditions momentarily halted any government initiatives on education. However, the author shows that the matter was an integral part of the 1943 municipal election campaigns – the first to be held after 1931. Indeed, education was to become a powerful tool the political parties employed during the war and after, especially as the rivalry between the local Left and Right became more intense in the later stages of the 1940s.

Simultaneously, the aftermath of the war brought further challenges for the island, especially as the British reaffirmed their intention not to abandon Cyprus when demands for enosis reached their peak. Precisely because they were determined to hold on tight to the island, the British put forward a Ten Year Development Plan (of which

education formed a crucial part) as well as constitutional proposals in 1946/1947. The book explores how such developments, including the convening of the Consultative Assembly, intertwined with developments in education. Indeed, Heraclidou aptly demonstrates how education is testimony of the extent to which political developments had now infiltrated all aspects of Cypriot life, affecting relations within Greek Cypriots and deepening the gap between themselves and the colonial government. Interestingly, the author also discusses the use of language in schools: the debate over the use of the *demotiki* and the *katharevousa* was in itself a reflection of the heightened polarization with Greek Cypriot political life.

The elevation of Archbishop Makarios in 1950 was a turning point in the history of the island and paved the way for crucial developments of the following years. The new Archbishop reorganized the Orthodox Church and placed special emphasis on education and the role of youth. In 1950 the Educational Council of the Ethnarchy was set up, which organized resistance to the British educational plans. Here, Constantinos Spyridakis, who was prominent in Greek Cypriot educational affairs during the 1950s and beyond, is also explored. In 1951 the First Pancyprian Educational Conference was convened, and, following a proposal put forward by the Archbishop, it was decided that the Church would take over secondary education by sponsoring secondary schools. It was indeed imperative, the author asserts, that the Church should defend its stake in secondary education. In early 1952, Makarios delivered his 'Call to Youth' speech at the Phaneromeni Church in Nicosia, in which he called for the intensification of the enosis struggle, and the Pancyprian National Youth Organization (PEON) was also established, soon to become the nursery of many EOKA fighters. Here, as Heraclidou notes, lies the beginning of the active involvement of schoolchildren in the struggle for enosis. Indeed, for Makarios the involvement of schoolchildren in the national struggle was a key part of his strategy. Schools gradually became the source of reaction against the British. This was especially true for the Pancyprian Gymnasium, which, in the words of Lawrence Durrell, was 'the perfect laboratory in which to study national sentiment [...] indeed a Greek island within Cyprus' (pp. 218-219). The book shows how, despite efforts, the British failed to penetrate into secondary education, which became more attached to the Ethnarchy in the dawn of the post-war era. Eventually, Greek gymnasia became a basic source for EOKA recruits.

The author further explores the role schools played in the EOKA revolt and the way with which the island's education system was affected by the 1955-1959 developments. As Heraclidou underlines, the extent of youth participation in the EOKA struggle was testimony of Britain's bankrupt education policy. One is left wondering whether the outcome would have been different had educational reforms taken place as soon as the British had arrived on the island. Images of clashes between British soldiers and pupils throwing stones at them – such as during the Severios Battle in January 1956 – remain

to this day iconic in Greek Cypriot consciousness. Further to processions and strikes, students also played an active role in passive resistance by boycotting any activities which were put forward by the Department of Education. In the end, the Zurich-London Agreements of 1959, which ended colonial rule in Cyprus, dictated that the administration of education would return, after many years, to the communities of the island. Inevitably – being a highly politicized issue – education continued to preoccupy Cypriot society in its post-independence experience up to the present.

In her absorbing analysis, Antigone Heraclidou uses a wide range of primary (including interviews and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Migrated Archives) and secondary sources. In doing so, the book brings new knowledge regarding the origins of the deadlock in relations between Cypriots and the British during the colonial era. It helps us better understand the development of a sector of Cypriot life that sparks political confrontation even today. All in all, *Imperial Control in Cyprus: Education and Political Manipulation in the British Empire* comes as an indispensable addition to the existing literature of the history of colonial Cyprus and as such it is highly recommended.

ANASTASIA YIANGOU

Call for Papers

The Cyprus Review (2019 issue)

The Cyprus Review invites submissions for a Special Section of Volume 31, 2019 on **A Tribute to the Memory of Prof. Andreas C. Sophocleous**.

Prof. Andreas Sophocleous passed away in July 2018. He was a Professor in Communication and Mass Media at the University of Nicosia, former Dean of the School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law of the University and former Director of the Mass Media and Communication Institute (IMME). He served as the Director of the Press and Information Office for many years. His research interests mainly revolved around the history of the Cypriot press, the history and geography of Cyprus, media and communications, journalism and Cypriot literature and bibliography.

We invite submissions on any topics pertinent to the research interests of the late Prof. Sophocleous and in particular Cypriot media and communications, as well as Cyprus history and geography for the special section. Any research work submitted should be pertinent to Cyprus.

Interested scholars should submit their papers online by the final submission deadline of 30 April 2019. *The Cyprus Review* is available at <http://cyprusreview.org>, and authors should consult the journal's guidelines for submission.

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