

**BOOK
REVIEWS**

**The first comprehensive biography of Doros Loizou:
Doros Loizou, The killers are on the loose
(Δώρος Λοΐζου, Οι δολοφόνοι κυκλοφορούν ελεύθεροι)**

COSTAS VENIZELOS

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Doros Loizou was only 30 years at the time of his death. He was murdered following the completion of the second phase of the Turkish invasion of 1974 and the beginning of the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus on 30.8.1974. His murderers, Greek Cypriots, members of the paramilitary organization EOKA B', were never brought to justice. Vasos Lyssarides, the then leader of EDEK, the socialist party of Cyprus, was the main target of the shooting. Whereas, he survived, the driver of the vehicle, young politician and poet Doros Loizou was brutally murdered at a time when the young Republic was still trying to come to terms with the destruction caused by the Turkish invasion of the island.

The attempted murder of Lyssarides and the murder of Loizou by Greek Cypriots ideologically opposed to them, even after the Turkish invasion, was a sign of new heights of the absurdity of the self-destruction of the Greek Cypriots. During the period of 1967-1974 and while the Greek junta ruled Greece, several paramilitary organizations were created in the island, the prominent Minister of Interior and Defence, Polykarpos Yiorkatzis was murdered, there was an attempted murder of the President of the Republic, Archbishop Makarios, and eventually the coup d'etat against him in 1974. Yet, all the above acts had happened during a period when the Republic was whole. However, after the Turkish invasion, all over Cyprus, there was death and destruction.

As the leading Greek columnist at the time, Dimitris Psathas, noted after the murder, it defied all reason that while destruction was taking place and while the Turkish troops were in the island, killing, raping and depriving the Greek Cypriots from their homes, the supranationalists who had mainly been responsible for

allowing this to happen, still had as their main aim how to murder their own compatriots, those same compatriots who were trying to resist against the occupation.¹

The book of noted journalist and adjunct faculty of the University of Nicosia, Dr. Costas Venizelos, is the first comprehensive biography of a young Cypriot murdered 45 years ago for his political ideas, Doros Loizou. Drawing on the archive kept by the family of the Loizou, interviews with people who knew him, court records, as well as a number of published and, mainly unpublished, sources, the well-crafted biography of Loizou succeeds in its main objective, which was to shed new lights in the personality of Doros Loizou. In doing so, it enables the reader to re-interpret an important moment in recent Cypriot history, the destruction caused by political violence and the failure of the Cypriot authorities to bring the murderers to justice.

Venizelos assesses the life and personality of the young left politician, discussing the events during which his personality and ideology was shaped; his participation in the EOKA youth, his expulsion from the Superior School of Tourist Education of Rhodes due to his political resistance to the junta regime, his studies in history in Boston, and more importantly, his intellectual activities. Loizou translated an impressive number of leading poets from the USA, South America, Japan, France etc, wrote his own poems and texts, speeches, reviews. As a student, he corresponded with US Senators, personalities like Antonis Mystakides Mesivrinou and expressed his views about current affairs. Upon his return to Cyprus, he was employed as a teacher at the English School; the term of his contract was to end one day after his murder. As a leading member of EDEK youth, he resisted to the coup d'etat and was eventually murdered in lieu of Lyssarides. Lyssarides reported to Venizelos how he felt that his life after 30.8.1974 was borrowed, how he felt that he owed the remaining of his years to the promotion of the ideas of the man killed instead of him.

The poetry of Loizou is a reminder of the tragic irony of history; He wrote (in my translation): «*A poet moves amongst us....Be careful! Wherever you meet him, shoot without warning....He is dangerous!*». «*And then they will say that they killed you by mistake, that it was an accident, a random occurrence.... Hail Mary, hail Mary, pray for us.... All us, the innocent Federicos... Us who are killed randomly, by mistake...*».

¹ D. Psathas, 'The Curse' ('Η Κατάρα'), *Τα Νέα* 4.9.1974 (in Greek).

The book by Venizelos does not end happily. He discusses in detail the minutes of the inquest carried out following Loizou's murder. As an Appendix to his book, he includes the minutes of the inquest and selected relevant speeches to the Cypriot House of Representatives. His conclusion is sufficiently clear: the murderers were known, but the authorities failed to bring them to justice. There was no catharsis, to the extent that one is possible for the unfair death of a young man. The sacrifice of Loizou reminds that civil strife and political violence have no winners. It also reminds, however, that resistance is never futile, that a society is founded on people who dedicated their life for liberty.

I consider biographies as one of the most important sources for the understanding of history. Biographies based on primary archival research and containing interviews by people, who lived during the era, further enable future researchers to carry out additional studies. I consider the book by Venizelos as a worthy narrative of the life of the protagonist of an unfortunate moment of recent Cypriot history and of the personality of a person who was much more than a victim and deserves to be remembered as such. The life and personality of Loizou and the circumstances surrounding his death, had not before been given sufficient attention by researchers and therefore Venizelos' book covers a vacuum in Cypriot history and allows further reflection and study on the, yet unwritten, history of civil strife in Cyprus.

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