

The Turkish Invasion and the Uprooting of the People of Kyrenia through the Testimonies in the Archive of Oral Tradition of Occupied Areas

[Η Τουρκική Εισβολή και ο Ξεριζωμός των Κερυνειωτών μέσα από τις Μαρτυρίες στο Αρχείο Προφορικής Παράδοσης Κατεχομένων Περιοχών]

George A. Kazamias
Cyprus Research Centre
Nicosia, 2021 [pp. 229]
ISBN: 978-9963-0-8163-9

In the first part of the book, oral history is presented as a special branch of historical science, one with its own theory and methodological tools. Following that, is an introduction to Cyprus and the pioneering of the Oral Tradition Archive of the Cyprus Research Centre, from which the research program and the writing of this book arose. Then, the author attempts a bibliographic review of the Greek literature, with a brief reference to the English-language and corresponding Turkish sources regarding the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

In addition, reference is made to the available archival documents of Greece, Britain, Turkey, the United States of America, and other countries which were directly involved in the Cyprus conflict, identifying the researchers' challenges regarding access. A valuable historical outline of the political and military events of the invasion is also provided for the reader. The first phase of the invasion, with important elements of a military nature, the truce between the two belligerents and the efforts to reinforce the National Guard by the Greek Armed Forces, are recorded.

In another subchapter, Britain's initiative to protect the foreign nationals who were on the island, by transferring them to its military bases, is presented. It is impressive that, by the second day of the invasion, more than ten thousand civilians of various nationalities had arrived at the two bases. In particular, due to the fact that Turkey was causing problems in allowing the transportation of the tourists who were in the region of Kyrenia to the bases, intricate measures resulted in their passage by sea.

It then explains the circumstances under which the truce was implemented, which

the author calls a 'partial cessation of military operations in places', after which the Turkish army continued to advance in many areas, in late July and early August, finding an opportunity to land more troops on the island. Therefore, the Greek side was faced with the dilemma of projecting resistance, which would, however, potentially cause the ceasefire to be broken.

An unknown aspect in the history of the Turkish invasion presented in the book is the idea of intervening units of the British Navy between the northern coast of Cyprus and Turkey, implementing a naval blockade in order to stop the transfer of Turkish military reinforcements. The proposal, submitted three days after the armistice, included a provision for patrols by Royal Navy ships as part of the United Nations force. Moreover, the author explains the reasons for its non-implementation.

Next, the situation of the Cypriot defence and the efforts of military reinforcement from Greece are described, with the most important one being the 'NIKH' (Victory) operation, that took place on the evening of 21 July, transporting the 1st Commando Squadron of the Greek Army. Additionally, the idea of forming and transferring a Greek division to the island, in the presence of Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis and Minister of National Defence Evangelos Averof, which was finally abandoned, and the unsuccessful attempt to transfer Cypriot students to the island, are mentioned.

The failure of the Geneva talks, on 14 August, led to the second phase of the invasion, proving Turkish expansionism in the most tragic and crude way. A ceasefire was finally ordered on 16 August, however some villages were seized by the Turkish army in late August and early September. Finally, the book lists the main losses in dead, wounded, captured, missing, displaced and trapped, due to the Turkish invasion and occupation. Looting of cultural heritage sites is another scourge.

The primary material of the book was drawn from the Oral Tradition Archive of the Occupied Territories of the Republic of Cyprus established in 1989 by the Cyprus Research Centre. In the second part of the book, the testimonies of citizens of the towns and villages of the province of Kyrenia during the invasion are commented on, and relevant passages in the Cypriot dialect are cited. It should be mentioned that the book follows a chronological narrative, helping the reader to better understand the course of events. In particular, the first part presents the occupation of Kyrenia and its neighbouring villages, the second the occupation of the large villages of Karavas and Lapithos, and the third and fourth, the occupation of the western and eastern sectors of the province, respectively, during the second phase of the invasion.

For the topographical understanding of military operations, the map listed at the

beginning of the book proves quite helpful. At the end of the book, also included is an appendix with a selection of transcribed testimonies of residents of the province of Kyrenia, which vividly capture the feelings of anxiety, fear and uncertainty of the residents, due to the captivity by the Turkish army. The writing style of the book is direct and understandable without that affecting its scientific attributes.

Such studies are welcome in a field that has been so understudied, particularly regarding the province of Kyrenia, which bore the brunt of the Turkish landing and advance in the summer of 1974. This book is useful for researchers of the history of 1974 as well as the local history of the island. Furthermore, it is a useful guide for the general public who are interested in their refugee origins. In conclusion, it would be legitimate and important to record the history of other geographical areas occupied by the Turkish army in 1974, such as Karpasia, Morphou, Nicosia, Mesaoria and Famagusta.

Andreas Christofi