

**HISTORY BOOKS THAT WERE INTRODUCED TO  
THE CYPRIOT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM  
AND THE REACTIONS OF THE  
CYPRIOT EDUCATIONAL  
COMMUNITY AND  
SOCIETY**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
CHAPTER 1: History Books that were introduced to the Cypriot Educational System and the Reactions of the Cypriot Educational Community and Society .....	7
The Attempt to Change History Books in 1935 and Cypriot Society Reactions .....	8
The Attempt to Change History Books in 2008-2009.....	13
Opposing Political and Educational Factions and the 2008 History Book .....	19
Reactions and the Content of the History Books.....	23
Narrative, Memory and History Education in Cyprus .....	25
Appendix A .....	27
References .....	30

## INTRODUCTION

Depending on the sociohistorical context, the aims of history education may range from the inculcation of national identity to the exploration of otherness. Further, among others, it emphasizes in the promotion of historical thinking and historical analysis. However, in many societies, and especially the ones under foreign occupation, the creation of empathy and the presentation of diverse viewpoints create sociopolitical diversions that cannot be silenced (Papadakis, 2008). The strongest weapon for a nation-state is to have and use the teaching of language and history. With these subjects, the state, attempts to pass its traditions, customs, ideals, values and historical achievements to its students and future citizens (Persianis, 2010). The knowledge of history will strengthen the national moral and foster attitudes and behaviors that a state needs from its citizens.

Further, history's importance is seen when any two or more governments from any part of the world agree, usually after cruel and bloody conflicts among their states, to appoint joint committees of experts to study the history books and make suggestions for changes. The aim of the committee, which was established by the governments of the states that were previously in hostility and war, was to abolish the elements that cultivate national prejudices and foster old enemies and passions (Persianis, 2010). Therefore, the governments of France and Germany, after World Wars I and II, decided to form a committee to re-write history books that would leave behind the tensions and passions of the World Wars, and lead the two nations through peace in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century (Persianis, 2010). In addition, each country gives emphasis on those aspects of

history that provide a better insight on the state. Therefore, inaccurate and untrue details or even myths (descriptions of hero's and events in mythical dimensions) are used in history school books by states that need to feel more national security, and want to increase their prestige (Persianis, 2010; Polydorou, 1995). The importance of the course of history explains why the writing of new books often causes acute disagreements and conflicts. History is the lesson that navigates the ideological morale and even; the foreign policy of a state. That is why the Orthodox Church, the political parties and the social organizations seek to control the writing of history (Persianis, 2006). Additionally, the propagation of diverse historical and political viewpoints forced the Cypriot political parties, educational modulators and the wider public to react against the policies behind the writing of new books on the history of Cyprus in 1935 and 2008. This is an interesting development for reasons both theoretical and political. What interests affect the reactions of political parties, historians and the wider public? And especially one that would indicate confrontations within each opposing bloc – why do historical traditions impede the writing of history books? And why does the content of the history books cause reactions?

The educational policies addressed in this research were not the policies of the technical level between teachers and students (in the classroom), nor the policies in the administrative level between the headmaster of a school, teachers and pupils (within schools), but policies at the institutional level within the state and society, where the educational systems are formed through conflicts of ideologies, ideological constructs and major interests. History books and politics have very deep roots that reflect on old responsibilities, sensitivities, disagreements and conflicts. Moreover, they are related to many political, economic, social, cultural, religious and national

security issues. History books also value issues of national identity and survival, matters of natural prejudices and themes of national aspirations and ambitions. All these factors repeatedly affect the educational system of Cyprus in various historical and social contexts, and under the pressure of various circumstances. The positions adopted and the arguments put forward, different each time, expressed the dominant concerns of each historical period and either acted with a positive incentive or as limitations in decision making. Politics in the conservative society of Cyprus were very complicated and tended to be explosive (Persianis, 2010). This explains why even minor issues, like the recent 6th grade history book for primary education in Greece that refers to the disaster of Smyrna in 1922 “thousands of Greeks crowded the harbor trying to get on board and leave for Greece” (Rebousi et al., 2007, p. 100), has caused major social conflicts.

In the Greek Cypriot educational system there were two different occasions when the history books were changed, and caused a major political dispute. The first one in 1935, after the 1931 October riots, when the British administration of the island decided to change fundamentally the curricula of the Greek and Turkish schools (Government of Cyprus, 1935). The other was in 2008 when the President of the Republic of Cyprus D. Christofias decided with his cabinet to establish a committee that had as an objective to provide a new history book on the history of Cyprus. Both cases were certainly different because the changes were made in a different historical and political context. The government that wanted to re-write history in the 1930's was a colonial government that wanted to serve the interests of the British Empire and eliminate the “Greek and Turkish propaganda” through the history books that came from Greece and Turkey respectively (Government of Cyprus, 1935; Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), 2003). On the other

hand, the government that promoted the change of history books in 2008 was a democratically elected government (2008-2013) that wanted to encourage the spirit of rapprochement between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities by facilitating the settlement of the Cyprus problem.

The recent history of Cyprus has been marked by multiple conflicts and foreign interventions, which provide the socio-political context within which the books under discussion were produced. A basic outline of the island's recent political history, highly contested though it is, is necessary as background. A word of caution regarding the limitations and methodology of this study is equally necessary. Discussing the history of Cyprus and especially the modern and contemporary age is akin to stepping in the confrontations of a political and academic minefield (Papadakis, 2008). In this report I employ a comparative approach as a critical device of defamiliarisation, and I use a theoretical discussion to indicate the structural problems and limitations of the historical narratives presented in history books by focusing on the underlying ideological principles guiding their representations of history.

Cyprus is geographically located in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea and this geographical position always had great importance in shaping the island's history and its inhabitant's lives (Hadjidimitriou, 2005). Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, just after Sicily and Sardinia of Italy, with a population of 800,000 inhabitants, as it was estimated in July, 2008 (Pashiardis, 2004). Cyprus' continuity of historical and cultural tradition interacts with recent political and economic commitments in regard to its recent entrance to the European Union in 2004 (Zembylas, 2002). Historically, Cyprus has had an adventurous history, mainly because of its geographical position at the juncture of three

continents, which indirectly affected the current situation with education in Cyprus. More precisely, Cyprus survived the Assyrian, Egyptian and Persian empires and it also came through the rule of Alexander the Great and the Romans in the Ancient world (Hadjidimitriou, 2005). Additionally, Cyprus was the Eastern boarder of the Byzantine, Frankish and Venetian medieval empires (Persianis, 2010). In the last four centuries, Cyprus was conquered by the Ottoman Turks (1571- 1870) and then passed to the British Empire (1878-1960) which declared Cyprus a British colony in 1925 and ruled the island until 1960, when it became an independent republic (Papadakis, 2008). The recent history of Cyprus has been marked by multiple conflicts and foreign interventions, which provided the socio-political context of the island. The independence of Cyprus came after the EOKA struggle (1955-59) against the British colonial rulers. The struggle, of three hundred militants with the active or passive support of all the Greek Cypriots except the left-wing party members of AKEL, aimed to unite Cyprus with motherland Greece and achieve the enosis, the political union with Greece, but it failed and independence was chosen (Hatzivassiliou, 2005). In 1960, Cyprus was declared an independent state, the Republic of Cyprus whose population was 80% Greek Cypriots, 18% Turkish Cypriots and 2% Armenians, Latins and others (Hadjidimitriou, 2005). The solution of independence failed to satisfy the expectations of the Greek majority who aimed for enosis with the cultural motherland Greece and the Turkish minority that demanded taksim, partition of the island. Both ethnic groups continued to pursue their national objectives and in 1963 intercommunal conflicts broke out. These conflicts continued periodically until 1967 when a new conflict amongst the Greek and Turkish Cypriots broke out (Hadjidimitriou, 2005). With the rise to power of the Greek military government in 1967 the Greek Cypriot leadership gradually

abandoned the objective of enosis and sought to safeguard the independence of the Republic of Cyprus (Hatzivassiliou, 2005). With the support of the Greek military government (Junta), that attempted to dictate policies in Cyprus, a small group of right-wing extremists named EOKA B staged a coup on the 15 July 1974, against the island's President Archbishop Makarios III with the purpose to bring union with the motherland Greece (Papadakis, 2008). On the 20 July 1974, Turkey invaded the island and occupied approximately 37% of the total territory of the Republic and nearly 200,000 Greek Cypriots were displaced from the northern Turkish occupied areas of the island to the south that was controlled by the Republic of Cyprus. Around 45,000 Turkish Cypriots were also displaced to the northern side. Greek Cypriots suffered the most in terms of people killed, missing and all other social traumas of war and dislocation. All these and most of all the consequences of the Turkish invasion influenced every part of life in Cyprus, especially the economy, the educational system, and the society (Persianis, 2010). After the Turkish invasion of Cyprus the old Greek Cypriot ideal of enosis, the political union with Greece, collapsed. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot authorities unilaterally declared their own state, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which has since been internationally recognized only by Turkey (Papadakis, 2008). In 1990, Cyprus applied for membership to the European Union and declared the European orientations part of its formal education. In 2004 Cyprus entered the European Union and in 2008 it introduced the Euro as its national currency. These developments along with the globalization on both economic and cultural levels created new needs to modernize all facets of education in Cyprus (Zembylas, 2002).



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **HISTORY BOOKS THAT WERE INTRODUCED TO THE CYPRIOT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE REACTIONS OF THE CYPRIOT EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY**

Despite the different political goals and historical periods, the two historical books that were introduced in the Cypriot educational system caused a major political and social dispute. The first one in 1935, after the 1931 October riots, when the British administration of the island decided to change fundamentally the curricula of the Greek and Turkish primary schools. The other was in 2008 when the Christofias administration decided to write a new Cypriot history school book for higher secondary education.

The background and the basic principles of the Greek Cypriot school books are based dominantly on the paradigm of the history of Greece. The dominant narrative of the history of Greece is mainly divided into three main periods: Ancient Greece, Medieval Greece (the ‘glorious’ Eastern Roman Empire – Byzantine Empire), and Modern Greece (the creation and expansion of the Greek state in the 19th and 20th century). Particular emphasis is added in pre-historic Ancient Greece and especially the eras of the Cyclades, Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations. Ancient Greece is also described as the beginning of History, which is succeeded by ‘foreign domination’. Greek history continues with the rise of the one thousand years Byzantine Empire (which is considered to be a glorious ‘Greek’ empire) and finally, it describes the liberation from ‘Ottoman Turkish occupation’ and the creation of the Modern Greek state (Papadakis, 2008).

## **THE ATTEMPT TO CHANGE HISTORY BOOKS IN 1935 AND CYPRIOT SOCIETY REACTIONS**

The British administration of Cyprus had implemented from 1878 to 1931 a liberal educational policy. This policy enabled the Greek Cypriot schools to apply the curricula and the Greek books that were used in the Greek educational system. The same educational policy enabled the Turkish Cypriots to use the curricula and books that came directly from Turkey (Persianis, 2010).

This educational liberty was removed by the British administration after the Greek Cypriot uprising in October 1931 (see Appendix A). The colonial government felt that this educational freedom led to the Greek Cypriot request for unification enosis of Cyprus with Greece, and for this reason the administration felt that it could take those actions and measures to change this situation. The main objectives of the British were to prevent the foreign propaganda (from Greece and Turkey) which placed the concept of identification with the 'mother countries' (Mirianthopoulos, 1946), to develop a culture of loyalty towards the British Empire (Colonial Office Papers, 1937), and to offer to the Cypriots (Greek and Turkish) specific guarantees that would bring them closer to the colonial government and make them recognize the benefits they would have as citizens of the British Empire. This was decided to be technical training, both in towns and villages, in order to increase employment opportunities in cities and raise the level of development of the land in the rural districts of the island (Persianis, 2010). All objectives were decided to be achieved through education. Education was seen as the means, by British politicians and governors, to establish their rule on the island and avoid future uprisings (Colonial Office Papers, 1937).

The British administration of Cyprus decided to change fundamentally the different curriculums that were taught at the Greek and Turkish elementary schools (Persianis, 2010). All the Greek history books employed the term Cypriots (Kyprioi) as equivalent to Greeks (Ellines), often within the same sentence or paragraph. As Papadakis (2008) rightly argued:

This practice inculcates in the historical consciousness of Greek Cypriots the belief that from the period of the Mycenaeans to the present there have never been any other indigenous population groups except the Greeks or, at the very least, that the presence of any others was and is parasitic (p. 7).

On the other hand, the Turkish history book presented Cyprus as nothing but part of Turkish history (Papadakis, 2008). Additionally, the Turkish history book analyzed the “historical-geographical, strategic and economic perspectives” of Cyprus being connected to Anatolia (Turkey) while “for Greece, Cyprus had no significance at all; neither from a historical nor from a strategic perspective” (Papadakis, p. 13). The British in an attempt to foster the belief of both the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots that they were not citizens of Greece or Turkey developed a Cypriot sense of nationality in the British Empire (Hadjidimitriou, 2005).

The colonial administration, as expected, was eager to change the curriculums and the history school books. In the new curriculums the concept of motherland (Greece and Turkey) was abolished and had no place in education. Further, national ideals, national identity and loyalty to the mother-nation could not be found. Moreover, the material of Greek and Turkish history taught to students of primary schools was limited and was included as part of World History.

The historical events and the heroes of Greek history, that were taught to the students of Years 1 and 2 of primary school, were the historical events and heroes,

that influenced with substantial changes, the world's history. Thus, the lesson of history that was taught to students included: The stories of great men and women and myths and stories of great nations: e.g., Midas, Odysseus, Hercules, the Golden Fleece, the Trojan horse, Horatius, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Caesar, Charlemagne, Tamerlane, Muhammad, Richard the Lion-heart, Jeanne d'Arc, Columbus, Napoleon the Great, Nelson and Livingstone (Government of Cyprus, 1935).

The British administration began immediate efforts to write a textbook on the "History of Cyprus." The governor of the island, Sir R. Palmer, suggested in a letter he sent to the British Colonial Minister, for the preparation of: "an interesting authentic brief of the History of Cyprus [...] which would be used by all schools in Cyprus and would be available for the general public at a reasonable price" (Colonial Office Papers, 1936, p. 158). The Governor suggested that the teaching of History in schools was limited to either the Greek history at the Orthodox Christian schools, in which Cyprus was portrayed as "unredeemed Greece," or Turkish history, which made unreasonable claims for the Turks as a race and for their language, while changes were made in Turkey itself. The Governor continues:

There has never been an attempt to present or teach the History of Cyprus itself as a unity that will give the right perspectives in the various phases or periods of presence in the historical chronicles. In the eyes of the wider population, the eldest history has been twisted and presented completely out of the historical perspective depending on whether the teachers were Greek Orthodox or Turkish with kemalist beliefs (p. 158).

The Government aimed to subjugate the elementary and control secondary education in an attempt to achieve the weakening of the enosis movement. As a first step, the British administration prohibited the use of national symbols (the Greek national anthem was replaced by the British), the national celebrations in schools,

and the decoration of classes with Greek heroes who fought in the 1821 Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire. Further, the British administration limited the teaching hours and syllabi of Greek history to such extent that this act equalled its abrogation, and, on the other hand, introduced English as a second language in Years 5 and 6 of Primary education. The Government also abolished the sponsorship of the Pancyprrian Hellenic School and proceeded in the establishment of a state school. It took measures to control the independent community of secondary schools, and introduced an English school, as a role model for secondary education in Cyprus (MoEC, 2003).

These measures provoked a strong reaction from the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, even though it was weakened by the exile of bishops Kitiou and Kyreneias (they had been exiled from Cyprus after the uprising of 1931). The only survivor, the bishop of Paphos Leontios, who was acting as Archbishop at the time, as an Ethnarch, expressed the feelings and emotions of the Orthodox Church to the British governor (MoEC, 2003).

On 24 December 1934, according to Persianis (2010), the bishop of Paphos Leontios sent a letter to the governor of the island which was protesting against the “abolishment of the teaching of Greek history and of the geography of Greece, and the introduction and teaching of the additional English language” (p. 124). For the decrease in hours in the teaching of history the bishop remarked that this was unacceptable and intolerable. The governor responded briefly and hard, and made clear to the bishop that he could not correspond with him on matters that dealt with the cosmic education of students and had already been approved by the competent authorities (Mirianthopoulos, 1946).

Leontios responded with a new letter 11 months later on 18 November 1935. In this memorandum he expressed his anger and fury over the issue of the introduction of the new history books. His views reflect the dominant political, educational and social voice of that time (Mirianthopoulos, 1946).

...the introduction of English; a foreign language to us and at the same time the abolition of Greek History and Geography are a clear proof that the government's intention is none other than a deleterious effect on the national consciousness of the Greek Cypriot children. ...not even three pages are available for Greek History, not even three hours will the Greek Cypriot primary teachers have to teach History, for six years, to the Greek Cypriot children. This is terrible not just to see but also to hear. For History to be hindered by the English government – in the same way as the Turkish did – and with the force of law – not to leave the children of Cyprus be taught the History of their ancestors, while children of other foreign nations can be taught Greek History and Mythology (pp. 120-122).

The second memorandum of Leontios was not successful. The governor's response was the same and this time he underlined the indecent tone of the statement.

The writing of the new history book and its acceptance by the Greek Cypriots was a task much more difficult than the governor and the other enthusiasts of this idea could imagine (Public State Archives of the Republic of Cyprus, 1932). The "History of Cyprus" was very rich and its writing caused many difficulties, unlike the history of the African countries that was short and simple. Eventually, the governor found a very active British resident of Cyprus, Philip Newman, to whom he assigned the writing of the new history book of Cyprus. The new book was going to be published by the publishing house Longmans and the introduction was going to be written by the governor himself. This assignment came to an end because much time had passed and the governor had retired (Colonial Office Papers, 1939). Furthermore, the publication of Greek and Turkish reading books was also halted, despite the fact that relevant committees were established (Public State Archives of the Republic of Cyprus, 1939). The choice of writing a new history book was tested

and resulted in a dismal failure not only because of the negative stance of the entire political and social fabric of the Greek Cypriots who were led by the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, but also because of the lack of necessary printing infrastructure. This failure compelled the Office of Education to approve and import history school books from Greece.

The writing of a new history school book created a negative atmosphere against the British. The Greek Cypriots saw the writing of this new book as an attempt to be assimilated by the British Empire, to become British citizens. They felt that they were part of the glorious Greek nation (Polydorou, 1995), the nation that was the basis of the western civilization and that they could not be treated as an uncivilized nation, but had the right to be taught their own history. On the contrary, the British in order to avoid any future secessionist enosis tendencies, like the uprising of 1931, wanted to create British citizens by excluding history from primary education. They wanted to implement the educational policies that were used in all the colonies of their Empire.

### **THE ATTEMPT TO CHANGE HISTORY BOOKS IN 2008-2009**

The general framework and basic principles of the Greek Cypriot school books are derived from the dominant model of the history of Greece. This model posits three key periods: ancient Greece, medieval Greece (the “glorious Byzantine Empire”), and modern Greece (the creation of the Greek state during the 19th and 20th centuries). Emphasis is placed on ancient Greece as the beginning of history, succeeded by “foreign domination” until the rise of the Byzantine Empire (treated as a glorious “Greek” empire) and finally liberation from the “Turkish yoke.”

“Hellenism” is the transcendental, transhistorical category informing this historical discourse, which posits the historical continuity of Hellenism from ancient to modern times. Turks emerge as Hellenism’s barbaric archenemy according to this historical narrative.

The 2004 Report of the Committee for Educational Reform, which examined the entire Greek Cypriot educational system, concluded and described the Cypriot history school books as “Hellenoethnocentric and religious in character” noting that “the ideological-political framework of contemporary Cypriot [sic] education remains Greek Cypriot centered, narrowly ethnocentric and culturally monolithic” (Committee on Educational Reform, 2004). Occasional remarks made by Greek Cypriot officials on multiculturalism, critical inquiry and a democratic, interactive educational framework were rejected as rhetorical and not followed through in actual educational practices, neither in the general “educational system, the curriculum or the books” (Papadakis, 2008). The Council of Europe Recommendation (2001) 15 on the teaching of history in 21st century Europe calls for the adoption of the following principles:

... a history-teaching syllabus intended to eliminate prejudice and emphasizing positive mutual influences between different countries... develop respect for all kinds of differences... be a decisive factor in reconciliation, recognition, understanding and mutual trust between people...to analyze critically and responsibly...through open debate based on multiperspectivity, especially on controversial and sensitive issues... must not be an instrument of ideological manipulation, of propaganda or used for the promotion of xenophobic, racist or anti-Semitic ideals” (Council of Europe, 2001).

Despite the adoption of this recommendation by the Republic of Cyprus, the current history books oppose rather than endorse its principles.

Savvas Iacovides with an article at the newspaper ‘Simerini’: “Modernization. The teaching of History in Cyprus – Time for new struggles!”



attempted to challenge the revisionist aims of the Board of Education for changes in the history books. The author highly criticized the spirit of reconciliation with the Turkish Cypriots and stated that:

The Education of us (Greek Cypriots) could only be Greek either Mr. Kazamias liked it or not, but for a critical reason he refused to see: that Greek education always had and continues to have a unique and unprecedented globalism and universality, which illuminated continuously on humanity, something that had not been the gloom of the barbaric Turkism! (Iacovides, 2008).

“Proodeftiki Kinisi”, a union of secondary education teachers that aligns with AKEL, asked the minister of Education and Culture Dr. A. Demetriou, to withdraw the newly introduced history book for the 3rd grade of the Lyceum entitled “History of the Modern and Contemporary World (from 1815 to today)” whose authors were the Greek academics K. Svolopoulos, I. Koliopoulos and E. Hatzivassiliou. This proposal from the ‘Proodeftiki Kinisi’ was in line with the actions announced by the union to promote rapprochement between the two communities of Cyprus and a step for this to be achieved was the withdrawal of the history book. The proposal provoked a strong reaction by the union of secondary teachers ‘Allagi’ adjacent to DISY, the main opposition party. ‘Allagi’ argued that all the decisions taken for education were in the offices of AKEL and not in the Ministry of Education. The minister in order to mitigate the reactions of the ‘Allagi’ union asked OELMEK, the union representing all secondary education teachers, to decide for the history book, before he took his final decision (Educational battles, 2008).

Further, the President of the Republic of Cyprus D. Christofias in an interview that he gave to the London Greek Radio (LGR) commented negatively on the reactions of the political parties, especially those of the opposition, who were against the government’s policy of rapprochement with the Turkish Cypriot

community and stressed that his government would proceed regardless of these reactions. For the issue of writing the new history books he stated:

History books must show with a very powerful way the actions of the (Greek) Junta, EOKA B', Grivas of '67, and of '74, even though we have an (other) view of Grivas actions in the historical period 55-59, where with his instructions and actions we were nearly led to a ruinous civil war because of the murder of people of the Left, simply because they had the vision of the Left for a better society. All of these (historical events) some (politicians and scholars of the Right) used to ignore and present history in a distorting way (Interview of D. Christofias to LGR, 2008).

The President of the Republic D. Christofias continued in his interview and underlined the actions that were going to be taken by his administration:

We are in favor of reconciliation but we are against oblivion. This is the reason why we want to educate our children properly and learn them the real events and dimensions of the modern and contemporary history of Cyprus, and this will make them better Greeks and not de-Hellenize them. This will make them thinkers, creative citizens, who will build a society with their compatriots (Turkish Cypriots) without prejudices, and superstitions and in a spirit of friendship, cooperation and defense of their common country, without foreign interventions, assistance and tutoring (Interview of D. Christofias to LGR, 2008).

The Archbishop of Cyprus Mr. Chrysostomos II was extremely aggressive towards the policy of the Ministry of Education and stated that: "The Ministry has the obligation to teach the children with the Greek educational traditions" and that "history cannot be changed or counterfeited." At the same time he warned that "if they don't listen" he would proclaim that the Ministry of Education has "declared education under persecution" (Holy Synod, 2008, p. 19). The Archbishop has the right to express his opinion publicly on every aspect that concerns the Cypriot society.

Additionally, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus examined in a special session the issue of education and in particular the intention of the ministry of Education to provide changes to the history books. In the announcement,

published in the newspaper Politis, the Holy Synod suggested the following: (a) although the social conditions had changed in Cyprus after its accession to the European Union in 2004 due to its multicultural character, education could not degrade the identity of the majority of the Cypriot population, which is Greek, (b) the independent committee appointed by the deputy minister of Education N. Silikiotis in 2007 found no chauvinist elements in the history textbooks, (c) “the risk of falsifying events is visible, e.g. when those who opposed the liberation struggle of EOKA against the British are now trying to describe it in the books of history” and (d) in times of need of total unity, due to the criticality of the initiative discussions undertaken for the settlement of the Cyprus problem, it would be prudent to avoid any actions that would interfere with this unity (Holy Synod, 2008)

In November 2008 disagreements on the potential changes in primary and secondary history books were exacerbated even more. The minister of Education and Culture A. Demetriou was accused by the opposition that in his article published in the daily newspaper Phileleftheros on 09 November 2008, he asked the youth of Cyprus “to build a future in which our (the Cypriot) heroes will not be of dead teenagers” and therefore, he devalued the heroes of EOKA and placed himself to all those “who tried in every way to make the Greek Cypriots forget their history” (Demetriou, 2008). In contrast the former presidential candidate I. Kasoulides, in an article in Phileleftheros, stressed that the attempt of AKEL to change the history books was seeking, in the form of revanchism, justification of its attitude towards the EOKA struggle of 1955-59 (Kasoulides, 2008). Further, the former minister of Education and Culture (1993-1997) Klairi Angelidou, with an article at Phileleftheros, described the effort of AKEL to change the history books as “an attempt to demolish Hellenism” (Angelidou, 2008).

The announcements between the government and the opposition continued on a daily basis and the newspapers wrote of “a political arena, a war atmosphere and of hysteria” (Political Arena, 2008). The Archbishop urged the minister of Education and Culture to “get serious” and “declared once and for all that the education in Cyprus was, is and will be Greek centered and that our (Greek centered) history will never be forged.” The Archbishop also threatened the government and the minister of Education and Culture that if they “dared” to change the history books, he would urge students to “burn them” (Statements of the Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostomos II, 2008), and the minister of Education and Culture A. Demetriou responded and presented the Archbishop as a “budgie and ghost of the past” (Demetriou, 2008b). On 10 November the parliamentary Education Committee presented a suggestion to all political parties to halt the debate on the history books because it affected the educational reform that was in process and the minister of Education and Culture adopted immediately this proposal (Demetriou, 2008a).

Additionally, the minister of Education and Culture A. Demetriou announced that the ministry rejected the request of the Holy Synod for the involvement of two high priests in the committee on the teaching of history, saying that only prestigious scientists will participate in the committee (Demetriou, 2009). On 10 February 2009 the minister of Education and Culture announced the names of 52 scientists who would be the members of the twenty committees that would discuss and form the curricula of various subjects (Demetriou, 2009). For the lesson of History, the minister claimed that he had “to ensure the balance and broadest possible political consensus regarding the composition and terms of expertise” (Demetriou, 2009). The appointment of the expert as members of the committee was of a very broad political party acceptance.

## **OPPOSING POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL FACTIONS AND THE 2008 HISTORY BOOK**

The facts as outlined above reveal a harsh collision between the two opposing political factions that were trying to advance their own positions using all kinds of scientific, educational, ethical and political arguments.

The labelling of these arguments assists in a more complete understanding of the two opposing political factions. The scientific arguments of the bloc that wanted to change the history books were based on the fact that the history books used in the Cypriot educational system included inaccuracies (e.g., they said that the Greek Independence War was proclaimed by the Bishop Palaion Patron Germanos), were incomplete because they did not refer to the contemporary Cypriot history; and did not include AKEL's contribution to the social, cultural, economic and political life of Cyprus. Finally, they were ideologically biased since they were written by historians who belonged ideologically to the Cypriot Right. The educational arguments, of the opposing bloc, were based on the facts that the history books were outdated and away from the modern reality. The books, were also, badly written and badly printed (emphasis was given on the presentation of events and dates and also on the fact that it included black and white maps). The books were not pedagogically oriented and especially not friendly to the students, thus, they did not include sources and they did not allow students to come to their own historical conclusions and develop critical thinking. Finally, the history books included chauvinist attitudes and insults against the Turkish Cypriot community and fostered racism and xenophobia. The main moral argument, of the opposing bloc, was that the new history book needed to present the knowledge of the historical truth, "the real facts and the actual dimensions of history." This, according to the opposing bloc, will not de-Hellenise

the youth of Cyprus, but will make them “better Greeks”, thinking Greeks and creative people. Finally, the political arguments were based on the facts that “There must be a harsh criticizing of the actions of the Junta, of EOKA B’, of G. Grivas in 1967, of 1974, where his actions nearly led us to a ruinous civil war” (Interview of D. Christofias to LGR, 2008), and in accordance to the circular of the Ministry of Education and Culture “If we want to reunite our country, we must help to achieve rapprochement by growing culture of peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in view of exempting from the occupation” (Interview of D. Christofias to LGR, 2008). Therefore, the history book needs to be purified from chauvinist attitudes and insults against the Turkish Cypriots.

The faction that did not consider necessary the writing of the new history book justifies itself with scientific, educational, ethical and political criteria. The scientific criteria were based on the facts that there were historical inaccuracies in the history school book that could be and needed to be corrected, history was not the lesson to list dates and events but to interpret them, and they objected to the inclusion of obsessions and “ideologies” (Kasoulides, 2008) of one political party (AKEL) because “some have opposed the liberation struggle of EOKA and now are trying to describe it in textbooks” (Kasoulides, 2008, p. 23), there was a risk, according to the faction, of counterfeiting. The educational arguments were based on the facts that they agreed that the history school book was anti-pedagogical and that sources needed to be added to allow the students to reach their own conclusions and cultivate critical thinking, but they highly disagreed that there were chauvinist attitudes and insults in the history book. To support their argument they relied on the conclusion of four out of the five member scientific committee that was appointed in February

2007, by the deputy minister of Education and Culture N. Silikiotis (Theocharides, 2009). The main moral argument was that the history book should have a fighting and resistance spirit, a spirit that was required by the sacrifice of the EOKA fighters in 1955-59 and by the risk of biological and national extinction that the Greek Cypriots are facing. Finally, the political arguments did not oppose the policy of rapprochement with the Turkish Cypriots, but this goal should not “distract from the leading objective of the ending of the occupation” (Omirou, 2009), and further, the rapprochement and a “pseudo-progressivism” should not undermine the national allegiance and the national consciousness of the Greek children of Cyprus. The ministry of Education should “continue to educate in a Greek way the Greek children of Cyprus” (Statements of the Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostomos II, 2008).

A deeper study of the arguments of the two factions indicated that the actual differences among them were not their arguments but their prejudices. The prejudices eliminated all moods for logic and creative dialogue and created a large and unbridgeable gap between them. The basic prejudice, according to the two former Headmasters of primary education, of the side that wanted to change the history books was based on the fact that the books were written by politically conservative historians who were inspired by a right-wing ideology and that these books cultivated a dangerous mindset that caused many ills in Cyprus such as the terrorist movement of EOKA B' and the coup d'état that gave the opportunity to Turkey to invade the island in 1974. That attitude, in their opinion, strengthened nationalism and prevented rapprochement with the Turkish Cypriot community. It also hindered the achievement of a realistic and pragmatic solution for the Cypriot problem.

The main preconception of the other side was that the attempt to change the history books was part of a broader conspiracy that had its headquarters abroad (this suspicion was further supported by the intervention of the U.S. State Department, which in its annual report for 2008, requested, among others that the Greek Cypriot history book must change (Angelidou, 2008). This conspiracy dated back but was updated after the inauguration of the intra-Cypriot talks and aimed, according to the side that did not want the change of the books, to weaken the resistance of the Greek Cypriots against a new version of the Annan Plan that was rejected by the Greek Cypriots in the 2004 plebiscite. This conspiracy aimed to “demolish the Greek Cypriots” in Cyprus (Angelidou, 2008), to de-Hellenize, and to make the Greek Cypriots “forget” (Angelidou, 2008). These biases were amplified by the very deep misconceptions of the Right against the Left. The political Right and four interviewees were concerned that the real decision maker of the Educational Reform was the political left wing party AKEL and not the Ministry of Education and Culture.

These prejudices were so strong and deep that hardly any consensus could be allowed. Many journalists, columnists and even the interviewees reacting against these biases suggested with irony that the solution was that “each (political) party should write its own version, which will be taught alternately in schools each student must have his/her own history” (Theocharides, 2009, p.55).

It is obvious that education and the society of Cyprus found themselves in a critical historical juncture. The development on the issue of history books depended on the fate of the intra-Cypriot discussions among the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots and hence the ability of the Christofias administration to stay in office. Additionally, it is certain that the public debate on the content of the history



school book had deeply divided the Cypriot society. As Chrysanthos Chrysanthou wrote:

The only thing that the Ministry of Education and Culture managed was to cause division and lead the government in isolation. All political forces turned against the government to the point that President Christofias was forced to call for unity (p. 45).

## **REACTIONS AND THE CONTENT OF THE HISTORY BOOKS**

The main reason given in the literature influencing reactions of the political parties, historians and the wider public is the attempt to edit or even change the content of the history books. Similarly, the same reason is cited by the educational modulators and officials but also from the Church of Cyprus. The reason mentioned the most by the officials and the ecclesiastic representatives was the usefulness for any changes in the content of the history books. It is worth noticing that in the history books of 1935 and 2008 the main reactions focused on the attempt to edit or change the content of the books and rewrite history.

In 1935 Leontios, the acting Archbishop of Cyprus, who reflected in his expressed views the dominant political, educational and social voice of that time (Mirianthopoulos, 1946) stated that:

...the introduction of English; a foreign language to us and at the same time the abolition of Greek History and Geography are a clear proof that the government's intention is none other than a deleterious effect on the national consciousness of the Greek Cypriot children (p. 120).

Content pressure and historical traditions were the main reasons in the literature why in 2008 a controversy broke out amongst opposing political factions. These prejudices were so strong and deep that hardly any consensus could be allowed. In fact, it was more preferable for the previous history book to be taught in

schools rather than a new history book with historical mistakes and omissions to be introduced.

## **NARRATIVE, MEMORY AND HISTORY EDUCATION IN CYPRUS**

The Cypriot educational system for ideological purposes (primary goal of education was to stimulate the national morale and promote enosis, the union with Greece) along with practical (ensuring the right number of graduates from Cypriot six-year high schools to be accepted without exams at Greek universities), was almost completely identical to the Greek system (Persianis, 2010). The only exception was for primary education which was imposed by the British administration from 1935 with a different curriculum (Government of Cyprus, 1935; MoEC, 2003).

After independence from British rule in 1960, an independent educational policy that met the needs of a modern and sovereign state became subject to discussions. This effort to have an independent educational system was very difficult because of the large and acute dilemmas in educational principles, and the deep divisions between political parties and individuals. The politicized education that started during the Turkish rule of the island (1571-1878) continued and was more intense when Cyprus became independent (1960), but with different contents and presentations.

Two completely different examples of political education on the theme of writing history books were described. The first hard clash of the opposing factions took place during the British occupation and the second during the period of independence. The comparison between these two examples is very difficult, because they occurred in two very different historical times and were based on entirely different social contexts.

However, some elements and features in common can be traced. Firstly, these history school books caused a very high political and social sensitivity and great importance was attached to it. Further, the involvement in the clashes of the opposing factions of the highest political level (the Governor of Cyprus, the British Colonial minister, the President of the Republic of Cyprus and the Archbishop of Cyprus) indicate the gravity and importance of writing a new history school book. In addition, the dominance of prejudices in the public debate made logic and sober discussions impossible. The involvement in 2008 of the Orthodox Church on the issue of the publication of the history school book with the same passion and intensity as it did under English domination and the failure of the government of the Republic of Cyprus to recognize the right of the Orthodox Church to intervene with the same arguments used by the British, provoked fierce reactions by the Archbishop of Cyprus. The writing of history school books was for the British and the government of Cyprus a matter of cosmic and not religious education. Furthermore, the dominance of political rather than scientific and pedagogical arguments in the discussion of the issue and the fear of misrepresentation and falsification of truth was in 2008 as fierce as it was during the British dominance of Cyprus.

All these demonstrate that the writing and publication of history school books still have the same political importance as they had 85 years ago. The opposing factions clash not just in the scientific and pedagogical fields but also in the ideological and political ones.

## **APPENDIX A: OCTOBER 1931: ‘TA OKTOVRIANA’**

### **OCTOBER 1931: ‘TA OKTOVRIANA’**

The October 1931 outbreak coincided with the world’s greatest social and economic catastrophe of the last century, the economic depression of 1929. Economies were destroyed, product prices rose, and the labour masses were deprived of their income at the very moment when the cost of living rocketed. Cypriots did not only face this economic disaster but also had to endure martial law (Hatzidimitriou, 2005). These factors led to underground activity, disobedience and finally to riots.

Hence, ill-feeling and total dissatisfaction prevailed in Cyprus during the autumn months of 1931. On 18 October the Bishop of Kition (Larnaca) Nicodemos Mylonas, and member of the Legislative Council, read a manifesto he had drafted which urged the Greek Cypriots to resist the British rule and demanded its overthrow. He emphasized that the British occupation from 1878 had proved very clearly that:

Enslaved people were not liberated by prayers and appeals to the tyrants’ sentiments. Such appeals led only to contempt and arrogance from the tyrants, who regarded them as dissatisfied slaves. Their only salvation was national liberation; the foreigners were there to further their own general and specific interests, which had as an inevitable result the moral and material misery of the Cypriots” (MoEC, 2003, p. 224).

The Bishop of Kition (Larnaca) ended by appealing to the youth to lead the way to achieve a free country. This manifesto was accepted in principle, but the members decided that the draft should be considered at another meeting in a week’s time (MoEC, 2003).

On the following day it was discovered that exactly the same manifesto had been published independently by the Bishop Nicodemos Mylonas on the previous day and had been widely circulated with a personal letter tendering the Bishop’s

resignation from the Legislative Council. On the 18th he advised the crowd in Larnaca not to be afraid of the British fleet and not to obey the laws; and that in the quest for union blood could be shed (MoEC, 2003).

The events of the 21st October initiated the outbreak of violence on the island. The Bishop of Kition once more urged his congregation in a Limassol village church (Ayios Tychonas) to disobey the laws and fight for union (enosis) with Greece. The situation became explosive and the ‘humorous race’ as Sir R. Storrs (British Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Cyprus from 1926-1932) had described the Cypriots, was in a demanding and riot mood. In Lefkosia (Nicosia), Cypriots who gathered at the Chamber of Commerce, started to send emissaries to cause the church bells to be rung to gather the people to the ‘Government House’ (Hadjidimitriou, 2005).

At the junction of the roads Dionysios Kykkotis, chief priest of Phaneromeni, the most important church in Nicosia, stepped forward and declared revolution. A Greek flag was given to him and he asked from the crowd to defend it. He kissed the flag and cried “to the Government House” (Hadjidimitriou, 2005). As set out by several despatchers from the governor Sir R. Storrs, the events leading to the burning of the Government House were as follows:

7.45 p.m.

The procession arrived at the exit gate. The declared intention was to present the Governor with a petition on the island’s grievances.

8.00 p.m.

The crowd broke the police cordon at the exit gate and moved into the grounds of the Government House.

8.20 p.m.

The crowd surged up to the walls of the wooden bungalow and eight or nine of the foot police were lost in the crowd and consequently took no subsequent active part in the proceedings. By now the enosis chant drowned everything else.

Meanwhile the other policemen tried to keep back the crowd by expostulation and pushing. The officials and several policemen who had been standing on the porch of the Government House were driven inside by violent stone throwing.

11.00 p.m.

The Government House was set on fire. Within half an hour this inflammable mid-Victorian military wooden bungalow, diverted at Port Said from its intended Ceylon (Sri Lanka) destination to Cyprus by Sir Garnet Wolseley in Cyprus, was burnt down (Georghallides, 1985, pp. 695-699).

The island was in chaos and numerous demonstrations were held in all the cities. The Government brought military troops from Egypt that was under British control since 1882, and put the revolution to an end. Fifteen Cypriots were killed and sixty wounded, whereas, ten citizens were deported and more than 2500 put in prison. The losses in government facilities were extensive and the British demanded, and within a month got £35,000, as a fine for 'malicious damage.' The October riots marked the fall of a 'democratic' governing of the island. Dictatorship was established until Cyprus became an independent republic in 1960 (Hadjidimitriou, 2005).

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