

# EDUCATION AND THE TEACHING OF HISTORY IN THE LIGHT OF ENCOURAGING CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CYPRUS<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** – *This paper focuses on the different interpretations of the history of Cyprus that have surfaced in recent years, and how the resultant literature has affected the way history had been taught in the North and South of the island. The study highlights two approaches. An earlier approach where in the long period of the geo-political transformation of Cyprus, education served the national, political and ideological division of the island and stressed ethnic differences, and images of the other as the enemy. This was followed by a later more contemporary phase, which has attempted to use the pedagogy of history as a tool to further reconciliation and understanding across the geographical and cultural divide of the Green Line. The paper argues that these approaches, both at the level of the writing and the teaching of history, have been largely determined by the changing demands of both domestic and external interests. Thus educational usages and methodologies in the teaching of history often reflect in part, the changing parameters and praxis of international relations practice and theory.*

## The importance of a national memory

**A** country's history is a nation's soul. Indeed Hobsbawm (1992) tells us that, 'Nations without a past are contradictions in terms. That what makes a nation is the past, what justifies one nation against others is the past, and historians are the people who produce it' (p. 3). Kizilyurek (2001), writing on Cyprus, expresses similar sentiments, telling us that national memory is an unavoidable condition for the construction and embodiment of the national identity. The implication here being that the cult of historiography and the cult of nation are not separate, indeed the first is used to create the second, and legitimise the nation through the community of myths. For it is in these historical myths that we all too often find the past, the present and future of the nation (*Education for Peace*, 2004; Markides, 2005).

The history books on Cyprus, and to a greater extent its school textbooks, illustrate the truth of these statements. For a nation's textbooks are the vehicle *par excellence* to reflect and transmit the national memory, which is illustrated through this community of myths (*Disarming History*, 1999). Thus it comes as no

surprise that there is no such thing as a history textbook on Cyprus that details the exploits, the history, the national memory and corollary myths of a Cypriot nation (Kizilyurek, 2001)<sup>2</sup>, for such a nation does not exist (Dodd, 1998; Peristianis, 1999). Indeed, if we were to use Hobsbawn's and Kizilyurek's statements as yard sticks to evaluate the state of Cyprus, then we would have to argue that Cyprus is as yet a state in the making, and that these important attributes of nationhood need to be created (Denktash, 1972; Calotychos, 1998).

## **Location and the reach of empire**

Cypriot history books are numerous, for the island has been used as case material for studies on: conflict resolution, ethnicity, UN, EU, small states, islands, colonialism and empire building. Their quantity, illustrate more poignantly this vacuum, while detailing the story of Cyprus. They convey a historical reality of an island that has been constantly exposed to the vagaries of the international scene, and its history and social developments closely linked and largely dependent on external conditions. An island where external players were paramount in establishing the main contours of identity: cultural, linguistic and religious, the colonisers reinforcing their control, and extending their influence by tapping into the establishment, and attempting to reinvent this island's identity in their own image (Salem, 1992; Joseph, 1997; Dodd, 1998).

The key variable in understanding this history is that of location. The island is found at a superbly strategic site at the tip of the Mediterranean where three continents meet. It has been annexed by every regional empire, in order to provide for their strategic needs. It fell under the suzerainty of the Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Normans and Venetians. It sustained a period under Islamic rule, and as a result had its European and Christian cultures also tempered by a Muslim and Arabic/Turkish interface (Pantelli, 1990). A sense of heterogeneous island identity was therefore diffused by the constant exposure to external influences. The island population by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century consisted of a Greek ethnic majority and a Turkish ethnic minority that practised different religions, spoke different languages, and adhered to different cultural practices<sup>3</sup>. When nationalist aspirations were in full force in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, a unified sense of national island identity around a common heritage and history did not develop here. The inhabitants of Cyprus continued to consider themselves Greek and Turk rather than Cypriot (Scherer, 1997).

A study of the numerous Cypriot history books in English, which include Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot contributions, illustrate graphically this reality. Such cases include Dodd (1999) or Christodoulou (1992). Rather than a

history of Cyprus the texts detail the exploits of Greek and Turkish communities, within the context of the folk memory, and national myths of Greek and Turkish history. For history books and more so a country's textbooks all too often adopt a dialectic that reflect the needs, the doctrines, and the agendas of the ruling elites<sup>4</sup>. These elites were to be found in Greece and Turkey, for Cyprus attained 'a Cold War' independence. Cyprus was crucial to Greek, Turkish, American, Soviet and British interests. Greece and Turkey, both NATO members, therefore ensured the continued dependence of the island. It granted it a paper constitution, derailed UN efforts in the 1960s that furthered conflict resolution, and blocked the push toward a sovereign independent Cyprus, reflected in Makarios' politics of the early 1970s. The continued politics of *taksim* and *enosis* was essential in ensuring the Cold War regional politics of real-politic. This dictated that there was to be no Cyprus, but only an island inhabited by the forces of two neighbouring regimes (Anastasiou, 1996, 2000; Attalides, 1979; Borowiec, 2000).

## Writing history for the external elites

The history textbooks of Cyprus therefore, in line with the demands of foreign elites, do not promote a single nation but rather that of two external nations<sup>5</sup>. In this discourse there is no space for a Cypriot national identity, for this would challenge the separate Greek and Turkish identities which remained paramount for Greece and Turkey ('Greek government ...', 2007). Consequently, a post colonial critique which calls for historical acts of remembering, in order to call up and understand the full dimensions of the country's history, remains absent. Djavit (n.d.) in his article 'How history should be taught in Cypriot schools' indeed talks of the need to develop a Cypriot identity that will defend the independence, the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the island. However, as Childs & Williams (1997) illustrate, an understanding of one's present and future comes through the knowledge and acceptance of one's national history, thus these narratives are important vehicles to aid the consolidation of the new national state.

The history of Cyprus however is not written with the aim of conferring legitimacy on the Cypriot nation, but rather with legitimising the claims over the island of Greece and Turkey (Byrne, 2000). For Cyprus is the case *par excellence* of the fissures inherent in the Balkanisation of Europe, that have continuously threatened regional stability, and today still represent in miniature the main international relations cleavages waiting to tear our present global system asunder (Ioannides, 2001). Central Europe, through the centuries, has been home to large numbers of fledging small states, all seeking to legitimise sovereign status against the backdrop of contending big powers, intent on continued hegemony in

the region. This David and Goliath scenario is further complicated by a mosaic of relations in the region that include multiple ethnic origins and languages, different cultural ambits of Greco/Roman, Turkish and Russian origins, and a mixture of religious affiliations that include Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Islamic strains. Often all present in a single state seeking internal unity and external validation, as borders were often undetermined realities, they are polarised and utilised by these hegemony (Prodromou, 1994; Theophanous & Coufoudakis, 1997; Maiz, 1999).

In this scenario, recounting the history of these nations, and producing coherent school texts becomes of supreme importance, to both internal and external players. What type of national history, what type of national identity, what type of historical awareness is to be promoted? (*Disarming History*, 1999). For ultimately it is the school history texts, as Stojanovic (2001) tells us, that are among the most important means for shaping national identity and historical awareness. Owing to them pupils are at an early age imbued with images of their own nation, its place in history, its characteristics, as well as with images of other neighbouring peoples. This fact indeed gives history teaching a special mission which surpasses its educational task, and turns it into an important instrument of both state and international policy.

## **Textbooks as a political tool**

Indeed, history textbooks and the versions of history they relate have long been recognised as crucial instruments in establishing local, regional and global identity, and the impact they may have on the relations within and between states. Post World War One, the revision of history school textbooks was seen as a part of an important movement to reduce aggressive nationalism and promote peace. Post World War Two, efforts to reconcile warring nations were reflected in UNESCO's programme of bilateral consultations between countries for the improvement of history textbooks. The task set was that of eradicating a truth that stopped at national frontiers, and adopting one that reflected an international conscience that overcame frontiers. Countries, including Germany and France, worked on a version of history that both could live with, and utilise for reconciliation and integration (UNESCO, 1953).

Regional players in this scenario may also however utilise a human being's inherent need to have not only allies, but also enemies. Ozcelik's (2005) psychological approach to the Cyprus conflict illustrates this by showing how national elites do so by encouraging the creation of appropriate stereotypes in national history school texts. This method is conjoined with the inherent need of

individuals to maintain borders, and to preserve identity from contamination with enemy images. These psychological mechanisms are thus utilised to help maintain separate group identities (Spyrou, n.d.). When two ethnic groups live side by side, as in Cyprus, their impact is to make them become increasingly resistant to acknowledging likeness, and rather focus on, or create, differences. In time of peace, these differences are exhibited by dress, dances, speech patterns, and the like. In time of hostility, however, these minor differences assume a major emotional importance; some people have even given up their lives rather than abandon them. This psychodynamic process that affects the formation of psychological borders between two groups is best maintained and illustrated in the history textbooks through the concept of the chosen traumas and glories (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2001; Koulouri, 2001).

There are numerous studies illustrating the use of history textbooks as political tools in Cyprus. The theoretical bias is that of a post colonial discourse centred on the counter narratives of absolutism, constructed by the natives upholding an insular vision of homeland, reinforcing the insider/outsider dialectic (Hill Collins, 1990). An approach that factored in an oppositional binary relationship however would be more accurate. This approach is more complicated and less resorted to (Stoler, 2002). For what is needed for a more accurate rendering of the situation in Cyprus is a discourse of complicit post colonialism in line with Mishra & Hodge (1991; cited in Childs & Williams, 1997) who postulate that complicit colonialism is becoming the literary dominant of post colonialism, in conjunction with Said's (1978) critique that there is no such thing as disinterested knowledge, and that all knowledge is contaminated by the web of power (Kurtz, 2001). These schools of thought are in synch with current international relations theory shaped by a realist dialectic that is influenced by a discourse on cultural hegemony. This framework, I believe, would illustrate more accurately the influence that regional or adjacent hegemony may exert on the history teaching of their client states.

## **History textbooks call for integration**

Research in the area however is complicated by the presence of a number of overlapping and intervening variables. These make it difficult to draw the line between influence and pressure, indeed between complicit or oppositional post colonial phases in a country's history. Undoubtedly if, as Lowenthal (2002) states, history textbooks reflect a particular image society has of its past and indirectly how it imagines its future, then one would have to argue that until recently the futures the two communities in Cyprus aspired to remained that of union with Greece or Turkey (Gregoriou, 2004).

However this situation is one reminiscent of the chicken/egg dilemma. Education in Cyprus has long been sectarian. The production of separate textbooks for the two communities seems to have commenced in 1884 with the supply of textbooks from Turkey for the Turkish-Cypriots. The 1895 Education Law introduced two separate Boards of Education, one Christian and one Muslim. To date two separate groups of textbooks continue to be used linked to the different versions of Cypriot community history found in the North and the South of the island. Many of these texts are produced in the motherlands, others are produced locally, and as a Turkish-Cypriot student Erol Suleymanoglu pointed out, Cypriot history is written by Greece and Turkey for each country's own political ends, harming the identity of Cypriots ('Biased history ...', 2000).

Whether these texts reinforce external hegemony or local aspirations of *enosia* and *taksim* remains disputable. Undoubtedly, however, Greek and Turkish claims to the island are illustrated in the hegemony that they exercise over the portrayal of key events in the two histories of the island ('Greek government ...', 2007). These become forms of mirrored versions of single events. For the historical discourses articulated by rival nationalisms typically operate as oppositional pairs, thus the texts from the North and South both emphasise a number of oppositional stereotypes (Gregoriou, 2004).

## **A discourse of rival nationalisms**

The first is tied up with the all important origins of Cypriot settlement. Loris Koullapis (Greek-Cypriot), in his analysis of Greek-Cypriot history textbooks during a workshop on the subject, shows how they lay emphasis on the Hellenisation of the island in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC, and constructed an unbroken (Hellenised) continuity from that time up to the present (see *Teaching Cyprus*, 2000). He adds that the Republic of Cyprus has been functioning since 1963, in educational and ideological matters, as a second Greek national state, and through the educational system it has been receiving ideology and history perception emanating from Athens for the ideological needs of the Greek state.

On the other hand, in *Historical Memory and Communal/National Identity: The Turkish Cypriot Case*, delivered at a workshop that investigated how the two communities are mutually presented in their history textbooks, we are told that 'Ottoman Turks' are spoken of almost as present-day nations, so close in time and space, so internal to the discourse of communal identity. They were the ones who built mosques, bridges, water canals, opened schools, constituted a model of good and fair governance on the island, and believed to have protected both the Muslims and the Christians from the larger evils of the eastern Mediterranean. Their history

on the island was hardly contested, the politics of successive Ottoman governors hardly questioned. The history that they presented was detailed and yet flawlessly smooth; in its vivacity, it delivered a stronger sense of reality than either the British colonial regime or the post 1974 Turkish-Cypriot politics.

Strohmeier, participating in the same workshop, explains that this is tied up with a second oppositional stereotype that links the communities' achievements to military and cultural exploits that are foreign rather than indigenous. This twofold process is found in Turkish and Greek textbooks, both imported and local. Turkish textbooks insist on a victorious military advance through the centuries, while Greek textbooks emphasise cultural continuity and cultural achievements (Ozcelik, 2005). Thus the notion of origin, of continuity, of national pride and identity are attached to the presence of the outsider, the patron, diminishing the context of the indigenous people and the Cyprus-ness that they symbolise.

The third oppositional stereotype revolves around certain key historical Cypriot events, post 1960. The same events are described and interpreted in a very different way, and with a very different vocabulary, depending on the centre of the narration. December 1963 is one such event. This was the Akritas Plan designed to end the new republic by quickly suppressing the Turkish-Cypriot reactions to imposed constitutional change before outside intervention could be mounted. The plan was triggered off by an incident that occurred during a bout of intensified searches. One of these, on 21 December 1963, resulted in the death of two Turkish-Cypriots by Greek-Cypriot auxiliary police forces and sparked off inter-communal fighting. Rampant killings by both communities followed, although undoubtedly it was the Greek-Cypriots that led the rampage. The violence that ensued led to the total or partial destruction of 103 mixed villages and a displacement of about a quarter (nearly 30,000) of the total Turkish-Cypriot community. After their departure Greek-Cypriots burned and demolished their houses and a complete blockade was imposed on the remaining Turkish enclaves (Sonyel, 1997)<sup>6</sup>. In Greek-Cypriot texts these events are at best characterised by omissions and silence<sup>7</sup>. In Turkish-Cypriot texts this is a traumatic event that has been translated into emotional teaching. For Turkish-Cypriots this date, through the discourse of history teaching, is kept within the collective memory, as the community remembers the period as one of tyranny and victimisation (*Education for Peace*, 2004).

Another such key event is 1974: Between 1972 and 1974 conflict resolution seemed possible, and an agreed formula was in the pipeline. This may well have made a unified Cypriot nation a viable enterprise. However conflict resolution was forestalled, and in 1974 Greece invaded the island initiating a coup that overthrew the government of Makarios. Within days Turkey responded by invading the island and appropriating 34% of the land. In 1975 Denktash declared The Turkish

Federated State of Cyprus. The result was a division of Cyprus that is still in place today. The Turkish invasion was followed by the displacement of circa 180,000 Greek-Cypriots who moved South, and consequently lost their land, untold loss of life, and over 1,600 individuals who remained unaccounted for (Joseph, 1997). In Turkish-Cypriot textbooks this event is seen as the ‘the happy end’ for the Turkish-Cypriot community which arrives in 1974 when Turkey undertakes a military intervention (called the ‘Peace Operation’) and divided Cyprus geographically and demographically into two, North and South. Thereafter, ‘the Turkish Cypriots are living happily in North Cyprus’ (*Education for Peace*, 2004, p. 4). For the Greek-Cypriots, 1974 remains the date when everything went wrong in Cyprus, it is a traumatic period of unmentionable loss and betrayal (Demetriou, 2005).

## **History textbooks: a balance sheet of history**

These portrayals tie up with the didactic use history textbooks are put to in Cyprus as a form of balance sheet of history. They become mnemonic devices that build up a rhetoric of blame based on the objectification of the victim (‘History is not ...’, 2004). The purpose, Zelia Gregoriou (2004) tells us, is to create the displacement of ‘Othering’: ‘the process by which, through shifts in position, any given group can be ignored, trivialized, rendered invisible and unheard, perceived as inconsequential, de-authorized, “Other”, or threatening, while others are valorized’ (p. 242). The purpose being to legitimise the position of the insider, and at the same time not to facilitate the political recognition of the other.

This nationalism often deploys racist and exclusionary discourses. This is illustrated in the stories told by the victims expressing a sole view and making the multiplicity of vision impossible. In the service of this agenda, children through their textbooks are exposed to horrific caricatures of their neighbours living only meters away across the Green Line. They are not only the ‘primary other’, but also the occupiers, the invaders, the enemy<sup>8</sup>. Texts use a discourse of highly loaded and emotional language, full of imagery that sustains a notion of an ‘us’ and a ‘them’. There are images of ruthless murderers and innocent victims. This polarising of the self and other was pointed out by the head of the Turkish-Cypriot Educational Planning and Programme Development Department in July 2004:

‘Our texts encourage the student to make enemies. In one part of a history text book it describes how Greek-Cypriots “gouged out the eyes, filled bodies with holes” etc. This kind of language, as well as breeding hatred, can also cause lasting psychological damage to the young reader.’ (Bahceli, 2004)



In both communities, history texts as political tools disallow the use of an analytical methodology that would open the mind and enable understanding (Koussertari, 2004). For within this oppositional discourse, the stereotypes continue to propagate not only an inaccurate rendering of the relationship across the ethnic divide, but even within it. The textbooks invariably portray the conflicts as inter-communal ones<sup>9</sup>. They do not touch on intra-communal conflicts, or those between client states and the mother countries, important variables in order to understand the 1964 civil war, and the 1974 invasions. Thus, the history textbooks reinforce the image of solidarity between patron and client states, with little mention of the relationship of coercion and dependency between the two. While inter-communal relations are never mentioned other than in terms of conflict and brutal violence, school textbooks thus eulogise the external at the expense of inter-communal harmony.

### **Post Cold War and the need for a Cypriot history**

The role of a uniform history in bringing Cypriots together has long been recognised, and there have been numerous discussions on producing joint history textbooks in Cyprus. Indeed, Rustern Tatar (2004), former auditor general of Cyprus, pointed out in a letter to the Cyprus Mail in 2004 that in 1977 he brought to the attention of those participating in the inter-communal negotiations the need for history textbooks on Cyprus that created consensus. It is however only since the end of the Cold War that a real discourse has commenced. This, once more, is tied largely to external remit. Post Cold War, we witness a new regionalisation of Cypriot politics. This is the birth of a new Balkan region, no longer divided by the politics of bi-polarity, which now provides space for the arrival of numerous small states. These states ensure their security and stability through eventual EU membership. Greece, a local hegemon, is by now an established member of the EU, Cypriot membership has been secured, as is the eventual start of accession negotiations for Turkey (Brewin, 2000; Borowiec, 2000; Jimenez et al., 2004).

In this new dynamic, the security and regional interests of Greece and Turkey now became complementary. Turkey is fully aware that without a resolution of Cyprus, membership may prove impossible, and Greece is also fully cognisant that the answer to the riddle of Cyprus lies in Turkey's membership. Both also acknowledge that once membership is granted to all three players, the problems of access and security of Cyprus become largely redundant, and both states would be better served if they could now shed this tiresome powder keg. Thus, for the first time, the interests of both patron states are in line with those of a state of Cyprus, built around the notion of a Cypriot identity (Christou, 2004).

A push toward Cypriot identity politics is now also encouraged by the most important regional player, the EU. For the growth of this organisation had heralded a shift in international politics from realist inter-governmental models based on national discourses and bi-lateral methodologies, toward a more institutionalist, functionalist and integrationist approach, based on multilateral mechanisms. Localised models based on a multi-ethnic Cypriot identity now become feasible within the context of a federalised EU (Zurn, 2000). The locality of Cyprus as a border member of the European Union was now also being articulated as an economic, political and cultural bridge linking the two shores of the Mediterranean, as well as a necessary bridge of mutual understanding and cooperation between the various religions, cultures and ways of life.

## **Working toward a history of Cyprus**

In this new globalised and regionalised climate, the need for communication and collaboration becomes imperative. External players once again acknowledged that the dynamic relationship between past and present affected not only how one understood and interpreted historical facts, but also how human actions would be determined in the present (Terzis, 2000). The complex and highly introvert and conflictual character of education in the region now had to be addressed in order to foster an education of understanding, for regime breakdown in the Balkans was a dangerous imperative in the EU's back yard as the cases of Kosovo and Bosnia illustrated (Molis, 2006; Friesendorf, 2008). In 1997, under the sponsorship of the Council of Europe, numerous associations from different Balkan nations came together to initiate a school of historical revisionism (the Southeast European Joint History Project) (Bonidis & Zarafis, 2006), that would allow the new states to cohabite adjacent and at times even shared spaces. Cypriot historians and teachers participated in these numerous seminars on the reassessment of Balkan history.

Comparative research related to the study of school curricula and textbooks was encouraged. The dialectic here was to be that of peace studies which promoted a history not of war, of political grandeur or political contingency, but rather sought a history of those variables that were central to peoples' existence, and brought them together rather than divided them. These included economic and social history, the geography of history, the environment of history, and a history also of different mentalities and different cultures. The approach was influenced by the annals school and driven by a multilateral, comparative-oriented social research. The ultimate aim was that of changing the image of the hostile neighbour (Bonidis & Zarafis, 2006).

The 'Workbooks Project' is the most recent manifestation of this organisation's work. Its long term aim being to encourage and support reconciliation in the region by allowing children to view the area's shared history from many points of view, thus opening up the past to discussion and debate through a participative and collaborative method of learning. In this way, we are told, the notion that there are many 'truths' and versions of events, as well as many common experiences (rather than just a national viewpoint and an unfavourable image of 'the other') will enable the process of reconciliation for the future to start. Through this innovative pedagogy, the children will also gain the skills and attitudes necessary for an open and democratic society to emerge.

The Council of Europe began a programme specifically focused on history teaching in Cyprus in July 2003<sup>10</sup>, on the initiative of the Secretary General and with the agreement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus. In 2004 the Council of Europe organised four activities in Cyprus comprising seminars and workshops which brought together about 400 participants from the two main communities, as well as from Armenian schools, reflecting the fact that Cyprus is multicultural. The focus was on teaching history as multi-perspectivity. An approach reflected in 'Recommendation 15 of 2001' on history teaching in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 31 October 2001 (Philippou, 2005).

Further projects were proposed under the Reconciliation Commission (Taki, 2004), which was to come into operation with the Anan Plan. The Commission was to be established to promote understanding, tolerance and mutual respect between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots in the light of the Anan Plan. The work was to include: (i) the promotion of dialogue between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots regarding the past; (ii) preparation of a comprehensive report on the history of the Cyprus Problem as experienced and interpreted by Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots; and (iii) recommendations to the federal government and the constituent states for action aimed at promoting reconciliation, which would include guidelines for publications and school textbooks.

## **The influence of the EU and writing history across the Green Line**

The influence of Greece and Turkey over Cypriot history is now being replaced by that of the EU, which now seeks a history which in turn would legitimise and to an extent even mythologise its role both within Cyprus and the region. The search is for a new community history, which would be focused on

a discourse of supra-nationalism. This discourse would focus on a pedagogy of history that looked at the grand project of Europe, and would offset and discourage major historical narratives that are ethnocentric or even narrowly nationalistic. In effect, we have in the making a new normative and institutional memory of this 'new' past, which codifies and homogenises the collective memory in the context of needs of the new external player, the EU, which requires a united Cyprus (Koussertari, 2004; Richmond, 2006)<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, a new journey has begun in the historiography of Cyprus. Sezai Ozcelik (2005) tells us that it is necessary to deal with historical and psychological barriers to achieve lasting and perpetual peace and political solutions like the Anan Plan. Thus, a school of historians have started analysing the conceptualisation of the minor differences, externalisations, projections, chosen traumas and glories, dehumanisation, victimisation, and ethnic identity (Yuksel, 2006). This is being done to gain a greater understanding of the historical, psychological and political barriers between Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots.

Increasingly, teachers and students from the two sides of the Green Line are demanding history teaching that is fair to both communities. In a bi-communal seminar at the Ledra Palace in 2000, the Bi-Communal Teachers Training Centre hosted *History: How Do We Teach it, How Should It Be Taught?* with support from the Fulbright Commission in order to promote inter-communal peace through education ('Biased history ...', 2000). Dimitris Tsaousis, a 17 year-old student, asked why so much 'blind gut hatred' exists among his Greek-Cypriot peers, none of whom were even born at the time of the invasion. He laid the guilt for this prejudice on a politicised education system that demonises one side and naively praises the other ('Biased history ...', 2000). In 2004, the head of the Turkish-Cypriot Educational Planning and Programme Development Department, Hasan Alicik, made history with a project that aims to bring sweeping changes to the way history is taught in Turkish-Cypriot Schools. His task has been to create a syllabus that will give 'an objective view of Cypriot-history' (Bahceli, 2004).

In 2008, a new EU Association Life Long Learning Programme that is to run till 2010 was inaugurated<sup>12</sup>. The project aims to develop innovative regional teaching materials, and the strengthening and professionalisation of history teachers and educators when dealing with multiculturalism and diversity in schools, especially in history teaching. A core-group of history educators from both parts of Cyprus are to be involved in training seminars to develop alternative teaching materials and to become experts in innovative history teaching. The discourse here is multi-perspectivity, viewed as fundamental to the teaching of history.

## Problem solving and unanswered questions

However Cyprus is not yet unified, the Anan Plan floundered, and the North of Cyprus remains excluded from the EU. These setbacks are reflected in the continued struggle to frame a unitary vision of a Cypriot state. Gregoriou (2004) illustrates these setbacks by explaining that in 2002 *The Modern and Contemporary World, 1815-2000* for third grade lyceum students was published by the Organisation for the Publication of Textbooks, under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Education and the Greek Pedagogical Institute. Depicting EOKA (a Greek-Cypriot nationalist military resistance organisation that fought for the end of British rule of the island, for self-determination and for union with Greece) as a socially super-conservative nationalism, the book was attacked for belittling the memory of national heroes, and provoked the reaction of the Cypriot Minister of Education who submitted a letter of protest. The depiction of the anti-communist aspects of the liberation struggle provoked an attack also against the post colonial demythologisation of the past. In another case, the *Cyprus Mail* (see 'It's our choice ...', 2007) recounts how in 2007 a new history textbook for 11 year-olds also ignited the wrath of clergymen and nationalists. The textbook's revisionist view of the Greeks' 1821 war of independence against the Ottoman Empire, and the flight in 1922 from Smyrna, modern-day Izmir in Turkey, was condemned by some as especially unpatriotic.

As recently as March 2008, Andrekos Varnava in the *Cyprus Mail* stated that:

'Education reform is indeed linked to reunification. Changing how society views itself, however, starts with education of the young. Most of the textbooks produced in the island in the humanities and social sciences, especially the history textbooks, give a distorted picture of Cyprus' past. They monolithically project the idea that Cyprus has always been Greek, that the Greekness of Cyprus was preserved during times of foreign oppressive occupations, and blame others for the division of Cyprus. They deny the multicultural history of Cyprus; the involvement of 'Greek' elite in the ruling class of the country; the common hardships and joys of the various communities at the lower strata of society; uncritically review contemporary history; breed hatred of Turkish-Cypriots; and, in short, are one-sided in their pursuit of the Greek or Greek-Cypriot nationalist discourse, thus poisoning children's minds against other communities, particularly the Turkish.' (Varnava, 2008)

In Cyprus today forces remain that view the island's politics and history within a constricted vision of narrow communal interests, formatted, within a dialectic of complicit colonialism ('It's our choice ...', 2007). However there also seems to be a general agreement that education plays a crucial role in furthering reconciliation.

There is also general agreement that Cyprus needs textbooks that teach diversity and tolerance, that teach children how to coexist in multicultural and multi-ethnic societies, that teach children that there is no one truth in history, that history generates conflict and that it is imperative that we learn to understand the reasons for that conflict.

There is also general acknowledgement that peace education, conjoined with a Galtungian philosophy of conflict resolution, needs to become the current coinage within the teaching of history. However, the case of Cyprus also illustrates the gap that exists between theoretical models and their practical applications. For the former often tells us little about the latter. In this case, what cultural models will be adopted? Will they include all minorities – for instance, the Armenians? What place will the new Turkish community, who have now settled on the island, be given in this new history? What language or languages will these textbooks be in – Greek, Turkish, English – and will these numerous languages be sustainable? What sources will be cited; Greek, Turkish, English? How will this history be taught? Will it be taught in co-educational schools? Will the production of textbooks continue to be completely state dominated? And if the onus for change continues to come from external players, will this affect the pace of change? These are questions that are being asked in Cyprus today. For in the final analysis there is a growing recognition that in Cyprus a space needs to be created for historians to write a history of Cyprus that is not tied to specific interests, internal or external, but allows the texts to reflect a multiple and sophisticated layering of history. Through these texts, a cacophony of voices will emerge, the voices of the Cypriots, a voice of Cyprus. Cyprus needs a common past, in order that it can have a common future. Under the new post Cold War scenario this space has opened up, and this enterprise is now possible.

## Notes

1. This paper was written after I concluded a much larger project, my PhD dissertation which focused on *The Role of External Players in Democratization in Southern Europe: The Cases of Malta and Cyprus*. My dissertation, which involved field work in Cyprus and a detailed analysis of original documentation, allowed me to gain some understanding of events in Cyprus. One, however, while working on any piece of research, struggles with one's limitations. In this case I was the outsider struggling to understand a society which though I recognised had parallels to my own must remain in part a mystery to me. I also spoke neither Greek nor Turkish. This shortcoming was offset in part by the huge documentation on Cyprus in English, including native newspapers, UK Public Record Office documents and EU documents. Nonetheless, at times I felt the constraints of not knowing the languages of Cyprus, and never more so than in writing this paper. For though there is a large literature that deals with the writing of Cypriot history textbooks which enabled me to write this article, I would

have much preferred also being able to consult the textbooks themselves. This unfortunately was not possible, and I therefore had to rely on others for an understanding of what lay between the pages of Cypriot history textbooks.

2. Kizilyurek in *History Textbooks and Nationalism* elaborates on the two different nationalisms that these textbooks illustrate and the fear of abandoning their different versions of national history.
3. Though Pantelli (1990) argues that a real cleavage did not emerge till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Byrant (2001) and Theophylactou (1995) also sustain that the development of a Cypriot consciousness and identity is possible.
4. Reynolds (2005), in *In Command of History*, talks about Churchill's six volume text on the history of world war two and the economic, political and cultural pressures that influenced the first draft and its Anglo-centric approach.
5. 'In contemporary Cyprus, the ascription of ethno-religious identity is highly political and juridical. Contrary to the submitted report of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), this paper argues that the gist of the difference – and of the 'Cyprus problem' – lies precisely with how groups and communities are described in official and popular discourse' (Constantinou, 2006, p. 2).
6. DO220/39 *Incidents from 21<sup>st</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> December 1963*; DO 220/47 *Cyprus situation 12-18/05/64*.
7. Look at the book *The Island Everyone Wanted: An Illustrated History of Cyprus* by Christofides & Lambrou (2007). While this book has a short chapter on 1960 followed by one on 1974, 1963 is not mentioned.
8. 'Unfortunately, Serter's book encourages the student to make enemies, and we were convinced that such an approach is not productive' (Bahceli, 2004).
9. 'Dimitris Tsaousis, 17, asked why so much "blind gut hatred" exists among his Greek Cypriot peers, none of whom was even born at the time of the invasion. He laid the guilt for this prejudice on a politicised education system that demonises one side and naively praises the other' ('Biased history ...', 2000).
10. History teaching activities of the Council of Europe in Cyprus in 2004. Background information and proposals for on-going cooperation in 2005. Item for consideration by the GR-C at its meeting on 10 February 2005.
11. Note the emphasis on a postmodern approach suggested by Thomas Diez (2000).
12. A three-year partnership agreement (2008-2010), together with a specific (and renewable) agreement for an operating grant for 2008, has been proposed to the European Union Directorate General Education and Culture under the Life Long Learning Programme.

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