

The Beginnings of British Rule in Cyprus: Ambivalence and High Expectations

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1878: Britain Takes Over

In the summer of July 1878, Britain took control of Cyprus, replacing the Ottoman Turkish rule. This was brought about by the Cyprus Convention signed between Great Britain and the Sublime Porte on June 4, 1878 and in the context of the Congress of Berlin. While the drive for colonial expansion by Britain and the other colonial powers has been greatly influenced by the need to acquire and control economic resources and raw materials, Cyprus had little to offer in this regard. The island, however, was strategically located in the Eastern Mediterranean, and from a British viewpoint, offered a solid stepping stone for the route to the “Jewel of the Crown,” India.¹ After all, the island was only 240 miles from the newly constructed Suez Canal, the key sea passage to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Later, Cyprus acquired added significance for Britain with the subsequent discovery of oil in the Persian Gulf and the total collapse and carving up of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. With Britain becoming the dominant power in the Middle East and the Gulf as well, Cyprus became an important strategic asset for the British Empire.

The pursuit of British geostrategic objectives was precisely behind the Anglo-Turkish Agreement of June 4, 1878 that changed

the status of Cyprus from Ottoman Province to a British possession. This was done in the context of Britain's undertaking to protect the Sultan from further Russian encroachment over Ottoman territory, which for the Ottomans was the disastrous result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. It was in exchange for this British protection that the Sultan ceded Cyprus to Britain which acquired the *de facto* sovereignty of the island while the Sultan maintained nominal sovereignty over it.² This changed in 1914 when Britain formally annexed Cyprus. Although Britain declared Cyprus a Crown Colony in 1925, the British did govern Cyprus as a colony from the very beginning of their rule.³

According to the Anglo-Turkish agreement of 1878, Britain undertook the obligation to pay the Sultan an annual tribute in the amount of 92,799 Sterling Pounds.⁴ The British extracted the money through heavy taxation of the population, the burden felt by peasants more than other classes. The annual Tribute, however, was never paid to the Sultan. Rather, it went to British and French Banks to service loans made to the Sultan in 1855.⁵ The question of the Tribute and heavy taxation became a serious source of discontent for the Greek population.

A British flotilla entered and set anchor at the Bay of Larnaca on July 4, 1878. It was led by Admiral Lord John Hay. Eight days later, on Friday, July 12, 1878, the Admiral, leading a small military contingent, arrived in Nicosia. It was early afternoon when Lord Hay, riding his horse, reached the Seray, the seat of the Ottoman administration in the capital of Cyprus. A brief ceremony ensued. The representative of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, Sami Pasha, read to Admiral Hay, the representative of Queen Victoria, the Sultan's firman transferring the island to Great Britain. Bessim Pasha, the last Ottoman Governor of Cyprus, then handed over the government of the island to Her Majesty's representative. Subsequently, Admiral Hay, accompanied by a British contingent of English and Indian soldiers, proceeded to the Turkish barracks and hoisted the Union Jack. As soon as the British flag was hoisted, a crowd of Greeks that has gathered cheered wildly. Their cries, *Zito e Anglia*, *Zito e Victoria* (Long live England, Long Live Victoria) filled the air.⁶ Three

hundred and seven years of Ottoman Muslim rule over Cyprus had come to an end and in a peaceful manner for that matter.

Sir Garnet Wolseley: The First British Ruler

Ten days later, on the morning of Monday, July 22, 1878, the first British High Commissioner of Cyprus, Lieutenant General Sir Garnet Wolseley (1833–1913) landed in Cyprus. He was already an officer of great fame in the British army when he arrived at the port of Larnaca aboard HMS "Himalaya." In addition to his regular reports to the Foreign Office in London, Sir Garnet kept a private journal or diary that offers a most valuable insight regarding the first steps of the British administration in Cyprus.⁷

In order to place Cyprus under British control, Sir Garnet Wolseley, commanded an expeditionary force of four hundred Indian troops arriving from Malta; two batteries of field artillery brought from India via Malta; three British battalions that came from Malta; and a Field Company of Royal Engineers transported from England.⁸

The fact that Queen Victoria's government entrusted Lieutenant General Garnet Wolseley the delicate task of taking over Cyprus and leading the transition from Ottoman to British rule, was indicative of the significance Great Britain attributed to its new possession. Indeed, the new ruler of Cyprus, the British High Commissioner, Sir Garnet Wolseley, was one of the most distinguished British military officers of the Victorian era. He was thought of as a true soldier fighting for "King (Queen) and Country." Indeed, Sir Garnet fought in the Empire's military campaigns throughout the second part of the nineteenth century. His military exploits became legendary and extended from Burma, to Crimea, to India, to China, to Canada, to West Africa, to Zululand in South Africa, to Egypt and Sudan.⁹ He played an important role in modernizing the British army and in the establishment of Pax Britannica. He reached the pinnacle of his military career becoming Commander-in-Chief of the British Army (1895–1899) and assuming the title Field Marshal the Hon-

ourable Viscount Wolseley, KP, KCMG, GCMG, CB. Throughout his tenure as Cyprus' High Commissioner, his mind was on the ongoing British military campaign in Afghanistan, and he repeatedly expressed the desire to become the commander of this campaign so he can be in the battlefield with his soldiers.¹⁰ In fact, he expressed the desire to die in the battlefield. As he put it:

I have great faith in my ultimate success, and hope someday or other to die winning a great victory that will add great luster to the renown and contribute to the security of our Empire.¹¹

It was to such a prominent, indeed legendary military figure of the Empire that Britain assigned the duty to governing Cyprus during the transition from Ottoman to British rule. Sir Garnet came from a lower class social background. Perhaps, this was one reason that he was rather averse to the pompousness shown by British aristocrats. This becomes clear in the private journal he kept. On the day he arrived at the port of Larnaca on July 22, 1878, another British ship, the "Black Prince," also arrived carrying the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Alfred, the second son of Queen Victoria. The Duke was in charge of landing troops to complete the occupation of Cyprus. That was another indication of the importance Britain assigned to the takeover of Cyprus from the Ottomans. But Sir Garnet was deeply unhappy with the presence of the Duke of Edinburgh. He considered him a nuisance getting involved in trivial matters. Thus Wolseley was pleased to learn that the Duke was not going to stay long, noting in his personal journal:

I wish these Royalties would keep out of my way: They retard public business and no one likes this "Edinburgh." His laugh is the most unpleasant thing I ever heard: no man could have a good heart who laughed as he does . . .¹²

Three days later, on July 25, 1878, Sir Garnet boarded another British ship, the "Salamis" to take him from Larnaca to the nearby port of Limassol. He describes his experience as follows:

I found the Duke of Edinburgh on board having asked himself to dinner: he has not asked any of us to dinner yet, but comes here with his usual meanness, for which he is notorious . . . He is a low mean fellow who talks nothing but himself . . . I wish to heavens that for the honour of our Royal Family and of Gt. Britain he would quit the Service.¹³

Keeping Sir Garnet Wolseley's disliking of the Duke of Edinburgh aside, Monday, July 22, 1878, was a historic day since it was on this day that Sir Garnet, the new ruler of Cyprus, set foot at the port of Larnaca and raised the British Imperial flag at the port's mast as thousands of Greeks cheered wildly. They welcomed the British rule with open arms. Sir Garnet Wolseley's first public proclamation came at the Larnaca ceremony. On assuming his duties as High Commissioner, Wolseley stated:

Her Majesty directs me to assure the inhabitants of Cyprus of the warm interest the Queen feels in their prosperity and of Her Gracious intention to order the adoption of such measures as may appear best calculated to promote and extend the commerce and agriculture of the country, and afford to the people *the blessing of freedom, justice, and security*. It is Her Majesty's gracious pleasure that the Government of Cyprus shall be administered *without favour to any race or creed; that equal justice shall be done to all, and that all shall enjoy alike the equal and impartial protection of the law*; and that no measures shall be neglected which may tend to advance the moral and material welfare of the people. And it is the expressed desire of the Queen that in the administration of public affairs regard shall be paid to the reasonable wishes of the inhabitants with respect to *the maintenance of their ancient institutions, usages, and customs* provided they are consistent with *just and good Government*, and with those principles of *civilization and liberty* which must always and everywhere be upheld by those who govern in Her Majesty's name.¹⁴ (Emphasis added)

The High Commissioner's utterances that the island would be governed without favoring one race or creed, meaning Ottoman Muslim, over another, meaning Christian Greek, and that the two groups will enjoy equal treatment under the law, along with the assertion that freedom, justice and security will prevail under British rule, was seen by the Greeks as God-sent. This was so, because these elements of British rule, when they prevailed, were the antithesis of the arbitrary, capricious and oppressive of Ottoman rule that the Greek population experienced for three centuries. The assertion that Britain would respect the "ancient institutions and customs" was also gratifying to the Greeks, as in this they saw the preservation of the leading role of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Greek community's affairs, even though in the British mind this leadership role pertained to spiritual and not political matters. There was also great satisfaction that Queen Victoria cared about the economic progress of the island that at the time was found in utter poverty. Upon hearing all these lofty words of Sir Garnet Wolseley, the crowd cheered enthusiastically. The feelings of the Greek population were aptly expressed by Bishop Kyprianos of Kition who welcomed Sir Garnet as follows:

We accept the change of government, inasmuch as we trust that Great Britain will help Cyprus, as it did with the Ionian Islands, to be united with Mother Greece with which is tied organically.¹⁵

Commenting on the enthusiastic welcome the British received from the Greek population of the island, Sir Garnet noted in his journal: "It is no wonder that the Christians should rejoice at our coming to relieve them from oppression under which they have groaned for so long. They are a wretched lot as far as I can learn, but what can be expected of a people bred under such form of slavery and ground down as they have been by masters who did not even care to conceal their contempt in which they held them."¹⁶ At another point he wrote: "[The Sultan] takes all the plums out of the island, throws upon us the responsibility of governing it well . . .

and insists on our paying him a large sum annually [the Tribute] as a rent for the estate he has ruined."¹⁷

Indeed, throughout his journal, the British High Commissioner laments the three hundred years of Ottoman rule of Cyprus. Apropos, Sir Garnet writes: "We take possession of an island when the ruling power at the date of our arrival is not fully recognized as civilized."¹⁸ Commenting on the advancing deforestation of the island, Sir Garnet comments: "Where are the forests we thought Cyprus was covered with? . . . [they have] disappeared under the influence, the blighting influence of the Turk."¹⁹ When Sir Garnet arrived in Kyrenia on Monday, September 1, 1878, he observed:

At our feet as it were below us lay the old Venetian or rather as I should say the Lusignan Fort with its round bastions protecting what it was once a little port, the moles of which are now in ruins. How everything seems to have withered under the blighting influence of the Turk.²⁰

It is with such sentiments regarding the Ottoman predicament in Cyprus that Sir Garnet Wolseley got ready to depart for the capital Nicosia. But before going to Nicosia, he boarded HMS "Salamis" on July 24, 1878, and sailed to Famagusta. He was seeking a suitable place for the encampment of his troops. Next day, he sailed on "Salamis" to Limassol, another port town. He was greeted enthusiastically and received a Greek deputation that conveyed to him the hope that his rule was a prelude to the union of Cyprus and that "England would follow the precedent set in the case of the Ionian Islands."²¹

After visiting Limassol, the High Commissioner returned to Larnaca and on the early morning of Tuesday, July 30, 1878, he and his staff, riding their horses, left for the capital Nicosia. Around noon, the same day, and as the Ottoman rule was coming to a close, Sir Garnet arrived at the island's capital to formally assume his duties. As he was proceeding into the city, he was thrown off his horse, not such a good omen, perhaps.²² He entered the city at the Famagusta Gate as a Greek crowd greeted him. He then rode

to the house where he was to stay during the next few days. He described the house as "a commodious place, clean but in the midst of filthy houses." This was a house owned by a Greek whom Sir Garnet described as "the villainous old Greek" and also as "the Greek villain who owns this house."²³ As for the Greek Orthodox priests, he described them as "dirty," "greasy," "oily," and "beggars."²⁴ Evidently, his highly negative view of Ottoman rule of the island did not mean to carry any favor with the Greeks.

Later in evening of July 30, 1878, Sir Garnet Wolseley rode to what he calls the "Konak," the Seray, the seat of the Ottoman government that was to be no more. This was the final act of the changing of the guard, the transfer of the island from Ottoman to British rule. Waiting at the Seray were the Ottoman officials who were departing, namely Sami Pasha, the Sultan's representative, and Bessim Pasha, the last Ottoman governor of Cyprus accompanied by other functionaries. Upon arrival, the British High Commissioner exchanged formalities with the Sultan's representatives. After he settled down, and as a sign of hospitality, he was offered preserved fruit that was washed down with cold water. He was then offered a cigarette and Turkish coffee. Present at the ceremony was Archbishop Sofronios II. When, Sir Garnet left and went back to the home he was staying, his visit was reciprocated by the Sultan's representatives, the chief functionaries and the Archbishop. With this exchange of visits, the Ottoman rule of Cyprus came formally to an end.²⁵

What the High Commissioner found in this capital city, however, was not what he expected. Nicosia of the time left him a terrible impression. He described the village-looking Cypriot capital as a "great cesspit which the filth of centuries has been poured."²⁶ Nicosia, as well as the other cities, was much more rural than urban. At the time, the capital barely had a population of 12,000, while the overall population of the island was overwhelmingly rural and poor. The general view of the other British officials accompanying Sir Garnet was that Nicosia was a filthy place.²⁷ Remarkably, similar was the view of Sami Pasha, the Sultan's representative for the transfer of Cyprus to Britain. Having seen Nicosia, the Pasha described it as "dirtier than any den in Constantinople."²⁸ In fact,

Sami Pasha told Sir Garnet that "Nicosia was a detestable place and that [he] was most anxious to go back to Constantinople."²⁹

The wives of British officers also found Nicosia an appalling place to live. They described the city in the most wretched ways, hardly a place for Europeans to reside.³⁰ Esme Scott-Stevenson, the wife of the first British Administrator of the small port city of Kyrenia, found Nicosia just horrible. As she described it, there were only labyrinth-like unpaved and dirty streets, filled with innumerable number of stray dogs that would not move, and someone had to step over them in order to walk. A butcher's shop had a few pieces of meat hanging over the door, but the meat looked black as it was covered with flies. As for the "hotel" she stayed, it was a misnomer for a hotel, but still had the name "Army and Navy Hotel." Her room had no bed, not a single piece of furniture; there was no water or access to it, while the walls were covered with thousands of little black bugs.³¹ Similar were descriptions of the other cities.³² A number of European travelers, who visited Cyprus during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, shared a common viewpoint that the island, including its capital city, had all the hallmarks of decay.³³

Given these conditions prevailing at the island's capital, the British High Commissioner found it objectionable to reside in Nicosia. Fearing for his health and that of his staff, he moved temporarily to the outskirts of the city. As Sir Garnet put it in his journal, "I am quite anxious to get out of Nicosia, for I am sure if we remained in it we should all suffer."³⁴

The High Commissioner set camp at the Metochi of Kykkos Monastery, near Saint Prokopios Church.³⁵ He and his staff, along with a military contingent, lived temporarily in tents. Still, living conditions were almost unbearable because of the intense heat reaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit. In fact, the adverse climate was the cause of several deaths among British soldiers. There were times, in July and August, when one quarter of the soldiers in some encampments around the island were sick due to fever and malaria. The inhospitable climate of Cyprus during the summer, and the diseases it caused, pervade Sir Garnet's journal as he was constantly

pre-occupied with the health and well-being of his soldiers.³⁶ That is why he pressed London hard to send building material to construct wooden huts for his troops. Finding it very difficult to work in his tent under such heat, he made an arrangement with Abbot Petros to use a little room at the Monastery as his office. He was most grateful to the Abbot whom he found quite friendly and agreeable. Otherwise, his view of the Greek Orthodox Church and its clergy was contemptuous. This, however, should be seen in the context of his overall view of the Church as an institution, including the Church of England. He wrote in his journal in this regard: "One of the reasons why I hate high church nonsense is that it leads to priest craft which tends to bring in . . . namely the villainous priest [who interferes] between the Englishman and his country."³⁷

Indeed, Sir Garnet's journal is filled with references of his disliking of the Church. He writes: "These priests are the same in all religions all over the world."³⁸ When he was paid a visit by the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar on December 13, 1878, Sir Garnet wrote in his journal: "Dr. Stopford the Bishop of Gibraltar arrived, a poor miserable little devil."³⁹ When the Bishop left next day, Wolseley quipped, "The Bishop left, no one is sorry to see the last of him."⁴⁰ Sir Garnet's contempt of the Church and the clergy in general, did not represent his rejection of religion. In fact he was a believer in the Bible. He wrote in his journal: "What a fool is the man who rejects the religion of the Bible because it is a mystery he cannot understand when he cannot account for the most ordinary phenomenon of nature without going back to some occult power which is in mystery."⁴¹

In this broader context of an anti-clerical spirit one must place Sir Garnet Wolseley's expressions of utter contempt towards the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. His highly negative attitudes towards the local church and its functionaries found expression in the aftermath of an otherwise celebratory ecclesiastical event. After settling down at the Metochi of the Kykkos Monastery, it was time to raise the British flag over the church. Thus, on Sunday, August 18, 1878, the Abbot, aided by priests and monks held a special liturgy, a Doxology, offering thanks to the Lord for the British arrival

that included the blessing of the Union Jack. Sir Garnet offered a graphic description of the whole episode in his journal:

Sunday 18th August, 1878: Went to the monastery church to attend a great function in honour of hoisting the English flag upon it: first we had Mass—Such a mockery of everything sacred, dirty greasy priests attempting to intone some dreary dirges . . . After the mass which was very long some of the congregation advanced to the screen which hides the altar and kissed the picture of the Virgin and of some ugly looking saints . . . The whole ceremony was like a penny peep show very badly done by very inferior showmen.⁴²

The British High Commissioner could not hide his overwhelmingly negative sentiments, indeed his revulsion, towards the Greek Orthodox Church. But after all, he also called the Anglican clergy "the oily priests."⁴³ What was more significant, however, was what followed the mass. Sir Garnet described the scene:

We all proceeded to the door of the church where on the steps there was more intoning and then at last the Abbot step forward and took the British Jack from the table where it had been lying while these incantations were being gone through and incense being burnt over it. As if our flag required any purification—and opened and fastened it to the halliards and it was hauled amidst loud "Zita's" from the ugly crowds. Cheers were given for the Queen and, the ceremony over, went back to breakfast.⁴⁴

The British High Commissioner description of the liturgy and the ceremony during the hoisting of the British flag, demonstrate his colonial mentality and prejudices by failing to realize the importance of the mystical ceremony surrounding the blessing of the English flag, the chanting, the candles, the incense during liturgy. Hence he laments, "as if our flag required any purification." Notwithstanding what Sir Garnet felt about the flag ceremony, it was of immense symbolic importance. After all, the Church had just

sanctified the English flag through a ritual performed by a Greek Orthodox dignitary, the Abbot himself, raising it on the church's mast as the Greek crowd cheered for Queen Victoria. This demonstrated not just the acceptance of British rule, but the wholehearted welcoming of the British as liberators of fellow Christians.⁴⁵ Rather than appreciating the outpouring of pro-British Greek sentiment, Sir Garnet saw the whole episode as a nuisance that came to interrupt his breakfast, hence his statement, "the ceremony over, went back to breakfast."⁴⁶

The British High Commissioner devoted plenty of attention to the deceases that afflicted his soldiers during the first few months, the summer months, but also in early fall of 1878. These conditions, however, the diseases, combined with the island's poverty, were ubiquitous when the British arrived in Cyprus. Children suffered from serious malnutrition and chronic fever.⁴⁷ An eye disease, *ophthalmia*, was so common, that in 1881 one in 83 Cypriots was blind.⁴⁸ Malaria was quite common among the population and leprosy was not that uncommon.⁴⁹ In fact, Sir Garnet wanted to know about that terrible disease and what was being done to deal with it. He resorted to Archbishop Sofronios II, who provided him information about a lepers' colony, a village only a few miles from the Kykkos Monastery where the High Commissioner was staying. The Archbishop, who had compassion for the lepers, had arranged for a priest to visit the village and conduct liturgy on Sunday and major holidays. He also believed that leprosy was not contagious and that lepers should not have been prohibited to enter towns. On August 16, 1878, two days after his discussion with the Archbishop about leprosy, Sir Garnet visited the leper village. He described his visit as follows:

I rode in the evening to the leper village which is near this: it is a tightly kept and neat looking place, but oh how loathsome are the inhabitants, and yet it is not very long ago since we had lepers in England . . . One cannot help feeling in the presence of a human being so afflicted "How is it that a merciful God can condemn perhaps a just mortal to such a miserable and loathsome condition of body?"⁵⁰

The High Commissioner was determined to eradicate leprosy from the island by constructing "two small villages with high walls around them, one for women and one for men and never to allow lepers outside and thus to kill the disease perhaps in one generation."⁵¹ He also promoted the establishment of hospitals and worked hard for the introduction of hygiene to the island. He strove for the building of roads and bridges and insisted that a mapping-survey of the island should take place as soon as possible. He considered the survey indispensable for a land tax, the basic source of revenue for the island. Accordingly, Lord Salisbury, the Foreign Secretary, dispatched to Cyprus then Lieutenant of the Royal Engineers, Herbert Kitchener.⁵² He subsequently became a legendary military figure in Victorian and post-Victorian England. Kitchener had just completed a survey of western Palestine in 1877, and the map he produced was a masterpiece, becoming the base of future geographical, archaeological and administrative maps of Palestine and Jordan. Kitchener arrived in Cyprus on September 13, 1878. Very soon, however, he had a fall out with Sir Garnet Wolseley, his superior. The High Commissioner wanted to have a land survey of the island produced quickly so it can be used for tax purposes. Kitchener informed Wolseley that he needed at least three years to produce the survey and a map that was going to have his (Kitchener's) name and would be a "model of its kind and that future scholars and archaeologists would be permanently indebted to him."⁵³ Sir Garnet was infuriated, finding Kitchener "annoyingly bumptious."⁵⁴ Kitchener proceeded with the land survey that was hampered, nonetheless, by the lack of adequate funding. By the spring of the next year, 1879, both Wolseley and Kitchener had left Cyprus. Sir Garnet was posted to South Africa to lead the campaign against the Zulus, while Kitchener was appointed Vice-Consul at Kastaman in Northern Anatolia. The mapping survey was abandoned in May 1879. However, the new High Commissioner, Sir Robert Biddulph, the successor of Sir Garnet Wolseley, eventually brought Kitchener back to Cyprus as Surveyor and Director of Lands and Surveys. In 1885, a thorough geographical, topographical, administrative and archaeological map of Cyprus was published under Kitchener's

name. It was a splendid map that remained in use throughout British rule and beyond.⁵⁵

By the time Sir Garnet Wolseley left the island in the Spring of 1879, he had only served as High Commissioner for nine months. During this short period, he officiated over significant material improvements that included hygiene especially and transportation. He could have accomplished more had he been able to use the island's tax revenue towards infrastructure projects. This revenue, however, was used to pay the Tribute to the Sultan. Heavy taxation that was imposed on the population in order to pay the Tribute became a serious source of discontent for the Greek population. This was not surprising, considering that there were British officials who saw the Tribute and the amount of moneys to be paid annually to the Sultan as absurd. That was also the view of Sir Garnet Wolseley, who wrote in his journal: "If we had not to pay the Porte such a ridiculously large sum per annum we could soon convert Cyprus into a splendid country. . . . It is simply ridiculous to think of paying such a sum."⁵⁶ Still, by the time Sir Garnet departed the island, material improvements were noticeable. The greatest change, however, was in the realm of the sentiments of the Greek population, the sense of relief that three centuries of tyrannical rule had come to an end and new freedoms were being introduced, above all, the freedom to express themselves and do so without fear of retribution.

Newspapers and Newfound freedoms

The area where British rule had an almost instant salutary effect was freedom of speech. Such freedom was nonexistent under Ottoman despotism. Criticism of the government, the Sultan and the local Ottoman governor or pashas by the Greek Orthodox subjects was simply unimaginable. All this changed shortly after the British rule commenced. British rule brought about a cultural renaissance for the Greek population. Indicative of this renaissance was that newspapers were first published in Cyprus in the immediate after-

math of British rule. It was also at this time, in the summer of 1878, that the first printing house was established in Cyprus. The printing press was imported from Alexandria where there was a Cypriot community that assisted in the purchase of the printing machinery and its transfer to Larnaca. It was here, that the first newspaper, a bi-weekly named *Kypros* (Cyprus), was published under the directorship of a dynamic teacher, Theodoulos Constantinides. It made its appearance on August 29, 1878, barely two months after the commencement of British rule.⁵⁷ A little later, in June 1879, the newspaper *Neon Kition* was published in Larnaca. Its publisher was, again, Theodoulos Constantinides: *Neon Kition* (New Kition) replaced *Kypros* and became the first bi-weekly newspaper published regularly. Thereafter, there was an explosion of newspaper publishing in the island.⁵⁸ There were only weekly and bi-weekly newspapers until 1936, when *Eleftheria* (Freedom) the most prestigious weekly newspaper, became a daily.⁵⁹ From the very outset, the press engaged in a lively discourse on a variety of issues, above all political. The three main political topics covered in the news as well as in editorials were the actions of the British administration; the developments in the Legislative Council, the quasi Parliament of the time; anything related to Enosis, union with Greece; and the relevant activities of the Archbishop and bishops especially.⁶⁰ The general tone of the press was to be critical of certain government actions but always had the highest high praise for Britain and the principles it represented, liberty, the rule of law, and parliamentary government.

For a people who have been under Ottoman rule for three hundred years, who were relegated to a subservient status and owed absolute obedience to government authority, becoming critical of their rulers, was in and of itself a radical step. Criticism of the new rulers did not take long to come. In February 1881, for instance, the *Neon Kition* newspaper was critical of the High Commissioner. *Neon Kition* thought the Commissioner had been deceived and appointed the wrong person at a local Kyrenia court.⁶¹

A year later, in 1882, there was stronger criticism of a high colonial official, the Kyrenia District Commissioner Andrew Steven-

son and his wife. The newspaper *Alitheia* reported an incident that took place at the Kyrenia-Nicosia road. At that time, the means of transport were horses, donkeys and camels. As it took several hours to travel from Kyrenia to Nicosia, horse riders and passengers of stage coaches took a break and rested under trees. The Kyrenia Commissioner and his wife were resting under an olive tree when a Greek named N. Michaelides rode by on his horse. The Commissioner was offended that he did not come down from his horse as a show of respect and threw a stone at Michaelides, hitting him on the arm while his wife shouted at the "disrespectful" Greek, *zoon Graeke* (you Greek animal). Mr. Michaelides was arrested, taken to court and ordered to pay a fine. The newspaper criticized the British couple as follows:

The Kyrenia Commissioner Mr. Stevenson and his noble spouse seem to have come to Cyprus determined to establish the era before 1821 by behaving in a way that poses a challenge even to the higher authorities. This incomparable couple engages in rude and absurd behavior . . . Perhaps Lady Stevenson, who has begun visiting monasteries, could become the beneficiary of a miracle.⁶²

Exaggerated as it was, the reference to 1821 was an apparent comparison of the British official's behavior to that of Ottoman despots. The travails under the Ottomans had left an enduring mark on the Greeks' psyche.

Subsequently, criticism of the Kyrenia District Commissioner became much harsher. His "exploits" became known throughout the island. In July 1883, the newspaper *Neon Kition*, published in Larnaca, mounted a strong attack against Commissioner Stevenson and his wife. This time, the particular reason causing anger against Stevenson was a court case involving, in his view, a violation of a hygienic order having to do with the proper storage of water. The Commissioner took to court a coffee shop owner for violating his order. He lost the case and the coffee shop owner was proclaimed innocent. The newspaper accused the Commissioner that he not

only conspired with the police against the coffee shop owner, but also attempted in a most underhanded way to intervene in court proceedings. The newspaper reminded Stevenson that in regards to other of his actions, such as the public works he initiated, he had been rightly commended and highly praised. Nonetheless, the newspaper viewed the Commissioner's overall behavior towards her Majesty's subjects as arbitrary and highly insulting:

Regrettably, since Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson, have from the very beginning behaved arbitrarily, engaged in insults, beatings and sending to jail anyone refusing to accommodate their unreasonable behavior, it will take a lot of time for them to return to the path of legality . . . It is about time Mr. Stevenson that you and your virtuous wife learned how to behave properly and how to respect the law and what is right . . . You are fooling yourselves if you believe that you can bring back the forgone era of the terrible courts we had when the gargle of the "narghile" was enough to send someone to jail . . . Truly, there are many who could curse the damned day when Mr. Stevenson and his noble lady landed in Cyprus and ensconced themselves as administrators of Kyrenia . . . We are not to blame thinking this way for it is the Commissioner's desperate and revolting deeds that are forcing us down this path . . . When someone is derailed from the path of duty and legality and is guided only by impulse, then he can behave with rage against the people as Mr. Stevenson does. It seems that July's heat wave has had an effect on his senses as well as on his brain. Indeed, Mr. Stevenson behaves like a satrap and the people of Cyprus cannot condone to be ruled in such a barbaric manner by a despot. We entertain the hope that the Central government will put an end to the violence-prone Mr. Stevenson in order to avoid further unpleasant developments.⁶³

This was an almost unprecedented press attack against a high ranking government official, unthinkable a few years earlier under the Ottomans. In fact, Stevenson was accused of bringing back the Ottoman era and its courts. The reference to the *narghile* (hooka)

was a clear allusion to Ottoman courts where accused Christians needed the corroborative evidence of two Muslims in order to defend themselves. The Commissioner is accused of being a satrap and a despot because his acts were beyond the bounds of legality. His wife does not escape criticism either. Such was the anger against both husband and wife that they are told that "damned" was the time since they set foot on Cyprus.

The criticism of the Kyrenia District Commissioner, harsh and highly sarcastic as it was, did not elicit any legal action against the newspaper. In fact, the newspaper, in its way, had praise for the British for it was the British who had abolished Ottoman arbitrary rule and introduced the rule of law. *Neon Kition's* criticism was directed against a particular colonial official and not against the government at large. In fact, the article ends on a rather optimistic note that the government will soon remove Stevenson from office. By the end of 1883, the District Commissioner Andrew Stevenson was indeed recalled to England. In his place, the government appointed the military engineer Captain Kenyon who was welcomed and won high praise as Kyrenia District Commissioner. Among others, Kenyon was appreciated because he learned the Greek language and passed the higher level exams in this regard.⁶⁴

Some three years later, in May 1886, it was announced that the Kyrenia District Judge Templer and the District Commissioner Kenyon would be departing for England. The word spread all over the island and the following report was published in the Larnaca newspaper *Phone tes Kyprou* (Voice of Cyprus):

It was announced that the popular Kyrenia District Judge Templer and Commissioner Kenyon will be soon departing (with their wives) for England on a leave of absence. They will depart with the next steamship of the Austrian Lines.

The Kyrenia District as a whole accompanies the noble couple with its warmest wishes as they depart for their native land. Whoever was fortunate enough to meet in person, but also deal indirectly with these men of virtue, has to admire their noble and affable character and their kind manners. They would welcome

anyone who wanted to see them, would listen carefully to their requests or grievance and do their utmost to address and rectify each and every complaint. Hence, they rightly won the respect and sincere devotion of the District's residents like no other British official in the island.

When the news of their departure arrived, everybody asked the same question: Are they leaving for good or are they coming back. This was followed by great joy when it was learned that they are only departing on a leave of absence.⁶⁵

The effusive praise of District Judge Templer and Commissioner Kenyon reflected the sentiments of the people who had come to appreciate and respect these British officials. The honest appreciation of these colonial officials was in contrast to the bitter sentiments towards Kenyon's predecessor, Andrew Stevenson and his wife. Such negative feelings, however, did not reflect any anti-British sentiment. If such was the case, the departure of District Judge Templer and Commissioner Kenyon would not have caused such sadness among the people. In fact, for the first four decades of British rule, the Greek population found several ways to express its friendly sentiments towards England and the High Commissioner, its representative in the island. It was quite common when the High Commissioner visited towns and villages to be welcomed by crowds waving the Greek and English flags. Upon arrival at a town or village, the High Commissioner would have to pass under an arch made of myrtle while the streets were strewn with laurel branches and more myrtle.⁶⁶ In the Greek tradition, both myrtle and laurel are highly symbolic as they express, among other qualities, respect, appreciation, joy, honor and glory. Such expressions of friendly feelings towards the British rulers, was always accompanied by overt expressions of the desire to be united with Greece and that liberal Britain would eventually allow that *Enosis* to materialize as was the case when England ceded the Ionian islands to Greece in 1864.

Folk Poets: Praise and Ambivalence

While there was enormous relief that Britain replaced Ottoman rule, there was still ambivalence among the people because they saw in this rule as yet another foreign power controlling their fate. In addition to the high expectation for *Enosis*, it was the plight of the peasants, the vast majority of the population, which constituted a major element in Greek ambivalence. In addition to what appeared in the newspapers, the sentiments of the Greek population towards British rule also found expression in poetry. These poems were composed and recited by what were termed *poitarides*, literally meaning poet makers. They were professional composers of poems who performed at a variety of island settings. *The Anthology of Cypriot Literature* defines *poitarides* as: "Inspired popular poem-makers who draw upon everyday life events (miracles by Saints, murders, suicides, accidents, love affairs, wars etc.) to compose lengthy songs (rhymes). They first print these rhymes in pamphlets, and then are paid to sing them [by heart] at coffee houses, squares, religious festivals (panegyria), and other cultural events and celebrations."⁶⁷

Folk poets were a product of Cypriot rural society and of a predominantly village culture in which the overwhelming majority of the population were peasants. Three years following their arrival, the British mapped the demographic landscape of Cyprus by carrying out their first census of the island in 1881. According to this census which, by and large, reflected the island's demographics at the time Ottoman rule ended, Cyprus' population consisted of 137,631 (73.9%) Greek Orthodox, and of 45,358 (24.4%) Turkish Muslims.⁶⁸ Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the Greek population was rural and 13% was urban. On the other hand, 74% of the Turkish Muslim population was rural, while 26% was urban.⁶⁹ Still, the great majority of the Muslim population remained rural and poor as the Christian peasants were. As for the island's capital, Nicosia, its population in 1881 was only 11, 536. Fifty years later, the island's demographic landscape had not changed much. According to the 1931 colonial census, out of the total of a Greek population of 276,

573, the overwhelming majority or 81% was rural and only 19% was urban.⁷⁰

Folk poets arose from this rural society. They composed, recited and sang their poems in the Cypriot dialect in a format termed *mandinades*. In his insightful study of *mandinades*, Spyridakis writes that they were "devoid of the artifice that characterizes learned poetry," but their creators were genuine artists, full of imagination and creativity expressed in lyrical form.⁷¹ This characteristic of *mandinades* is fully shared by Cypriot folk songs. This Cypriot dialect was a *topolalia* or the peculiar vernacular of a particular locale inhabited by Greeks. Thus, folk poems composed and recited in the Cypriot dialect belong to the broader genre of Greek demotic poems and songs that extended from the Greek mainland and the Aegean islands, to Crete and to Asia Minor. In all these areas, local Greek dialects were used in the composition and rendition of folk poems. The dialect spoken in the Dodecanese island of Rhodes, the closest major Greek island to Cyprus is quite close to the Cypriot dialect; also similar is the Cretan dialect.⁷² Thus when we speak of "Cypriot demotic songs," this does not imply that they are exclusively Cypriot, rather that they constitute a Cypriot expression of Pan-Hellenic songs.⁷³

In the socio-economic environment of the time, for about fifty years of British rule if not longer, Cypriot folk poets served a variety of purposes. Being like troubadours, their primary role was that of entertainers. That is why so many of their poems revolved around the themes of love, family life and honor, and various aspects of life's tragedies. Folk poets entertained their audience through satirical poems; their love songs exercised special appeal particularly among younger people. Folk poets, however, performed several other roles. They would become social critics, castigating social injustice, the unfairness of being poor and the exploitation by the rich, usually usurers who loaned money to farmers on exorbitant interest. Folk poets would also become the "political megaphone" of the peasants, their patriotic voice, by interpreting and expressing the peasants' sentiments and attitude towards British rule as well as the desire for freedom and the yearning to be united with

Greece.⁷⁴ Another role performed by folk poets was that of "journalists" reporting selected news, especially tragic events, many love related.

In the final analysis, up until the Second World War and even later, folk poems and songs were reflections of the ethos of ordinary people. They were ethnographic poems shaped by the idiosyncratic historical and social experience of Cyprus. As such, folk poems constituted an expression of popular culture reflecting the prevailing values and attitudes among common people, the vast majority of them poor, who had an enormous sense of pride and dignity. For these reasons, folk poems and songs were appropriately known as being the expression of the *pothoi kai kaymoi tou laou*, or the longings and toils of the people, the poor and the dispossessed.

With the commencing of British rule and the introduction of the printing press, folk poets were able to print their poems in pamphlets of 4, 8 or 16 pages. Selling these pamphlets at the *panegyria* and other cultural and social events was the main source of income for folk poets.

A well-known folk poet in the last quarter of the 19th century was Nicholas Kyprianou, from the village of Karavas in the Kyrenia District. In 1889, Kyprianou composed the poem entitled:

Το Παράπονον του Χωρικού
To Paraponon tou Chorikou
 The Peasant's Complaint (Excerpts)

Come, gather Turks and Christians too, the serfs of tyranny,
 let's shed the tears of bitterness for the country we live in.
 I have a lot to say to you, don't be in a hurry, stay put
 to hear about the better life we thought it came with England's
 rule.

We are naked, barefoot, and instead of water, poison we drink;
 the tax collector is on his way, we are waiting to be skinned.
 The farmers' suffering has no end, it's like soil with no grass,
 and the government's latest gift: the confiscator comes.
 When England came to Cyprus and settled

we had a great Governor, his kindness was legend.
 The peasants he rose to defend championing their right
 for he wanted to do good, listened to their plight.
 Good Lord, please bring him back, let's hear his voice again,
 but this sweet sound won't return, we are waiting in vain.
Oh, you Queen Victoria, justice is your throne,
the river of abundance you are, kindness is your dome;
 so please, rush and aid us from this misery to escape
 with skin and bones we are left, nothing is left to take.
 We are in the mouth of wild beasts about to have a feast.
You are the only one on earth to save us, please act with great
speed;

our delegates we send to you to tell you our pain
 less we are spared and are able to get out of this fate.
 We are longing to hear your words giving us hope, your news
 we wait,
 and from Hades our remnants will rise again, there is no time
 to waist.

Our Queen, with tears we plead to you while we state
"hurry to our aid, be quick before it's all too late."
 We thought when you occupied us that freedom has arrived
 but now we feel naked, parents, children left aside.
 We had some good legislators who gave rise to hope
 that somehow this island towards progress will go.
 But, oh my good compatriots, under tyranny we still live
 the English put in their ears the Spanish wax, it's true,
 so when we cry they rejoice and when we laugh they are
 sorry.

So I decided to write this, publish it with no fear
 since our life is getting short, our grave draws near.⁷⁵
 (Emphasis added)

This poem, composed barely eleven years after British rule commenced, clearly demonstrates the ambivalence felt especially among the peasants. They had high expectations at the beginning and were grateful to the previous High Commissioner Sir Robert

Biddulph (1879–1886) who was seen as friend of the peasants. But after his departure, the farmers' plight got worse. The only hope left for the peasants was the "great, generous, magnanimous and compassionate" Queen Victoria, seen as the paragon of justice and as their last resort. But again, the poet casts doubt that even Queen Victoria might not be able save the farmers for, in the final analysis, the British colonial rulers did not want to listen to their plight having plugged their ears with "Spanish wax" so they do not hear.

Folk poets who were born under Ottoman rule and witnessed the transition to British rule in 1878, made direct comparisons between the Ottoman and British rule. Their personal experience of Ottoman Islamic rule that was followed by that of a Christian nation, Britain, affected their poetry. While Ottoman rule was painted in dark colors, British rule was depicted as salutary, a blessing from the Christian God. Such was the case of the legendary Christodoulos Tzapouras (1845–1913). Tzapouras was thirty-three years old when Britain took over Cyprus in 1878. He is considered the "father" of Cypriot folk poets since he influenced the first wave of folk poets under British rule. He was known under the nickname *Archeos*, meaning ancient, both because he was born before the British arrived in Cyprus but also because his poems represented the old tradition of folk songs that were transmitted orally from one generation to the next. Several of Tzapouras' poems were transmitted orally and were still recited in the 1970s, two generations later.⁷⁶ In 1897 Tzapouras composed the poem:

Η Αγγλική Ευπρέπεια
E Anglike Evprepeia,
 The English Good Manners (Excerpts)

Our Nicosia, our city, oh my Lord and Christ,
 looks like it has become a great paradise.
 [England] built buildings, planted trees in the city all around,
 they cast their shade, extend their branches high above
 ground.
 It built bridges and fountains in villages that are quite far

where water was scarce, it was barely enough.
 It follows the rule of law, its articles to the letter.
 It built ports with docks needed to make this place better.
 Its great engineers accomplished this, they have the expertise
 and they improved this land, it's the first time we saw this.
 I know, you'll say "they've done this with our help," and all,
 but gentlemen, why we haven't done all this before?
 The Lord above looks into our hearts and gives us our due;
 He knows our laziness and our negligence too.
 Then He sends us a warning, once, twice along the way
 and when we fail to hear Him, a price we have to pay.
 We have no right to complain, it's simply not that fair,
 because the kingdom in which we live we do like and care.
 Look at the vastness England rules, lands without end;
 but governs without arrogance, it's evident wherever you
 went.⁷⁷

In this poem, Tzapouras, having experienced Ottoman rule (1845–1878) and having lived two decades under the British one (1878–1897), presents the English administration as God-sent. He expresses deep admiration for the infrastructure projects and public works the British built during the first twenty years of their rule, that make Cyprus look like "paradise" as compared to what existed before under the Ottomans. But Tzapouras also shows profound respect and gratitude that Britain's governing was based on the rule of law and that the officials followed "its articles to the letter," hence the poems title "The British Good Manners." This was in contrast to the despotic and capricious Ottoman rule. The poet castigates those who complained against the British, telling them that they have no right to do so because progress under the British was for everyone to see. Instead they should blame their own *oknia kai ameleia*, laziness and negligence, for some of the existing economic and social problems. Not only that, but Tzapouras praises British rule around the world because, as he put it, *kai ten yperifaneian pote den ten grorizei*, [Britain] governs without arrogance (over its vast territories).

In 1901, three years after Tzapouras' poem on English good manners, the renowned folk poet Christophoros Palesis (1872–1948), who was influenced by Tzapouras, composed a very lengthy poem entitled *E Kypros kai E Dioikiseis tes* or Cyprus and its Administrations.⁷⁸ Whatever grievances the Greeks might have had at a later stage against the British, one era where British reign made an enormous difference compared to Ottoman rule, was the introduction of the rule of law. This alone, made it possible for the Christian Greeks to breathe much more easily. Folk poet Palesis amply expressed this great relief while he extols, at the same time, the gentlemanly manners of the British. In the first part of his 1901 poem, Palesis laments Ottoman rule:

Η Κύπρος καί οι Διοικήσεις της
E Kypros kai E Dioikiseis tes,
 Cyprus and its Administrations (Excerpts)

Oh my God Almighty, the King of this world,
 I beg you, send wisdom, knowledge inside my head.
 Also, give me the chest, the heart, give me a voice that's loud,
 to go on, compose a poem, on Cyprus it's about.
 Please rush, young old, all of you gather around here,
 listen to my poem everyone, lending me your ear.
 On the travails of Cyprus I' will talk and be brief, I promise;
 but be quiet I ask of you if you are going to notice.
 What this island had gone through then, and what's
 happening now
 to this place that's been a happy one, and I'll tell you when
 and how.
 There were nine kingdoms, ancient ones, the books are saying
 so
 and today it is glorious England that is ruling here though.
 Our Cyprus has seen the rule of many peoples.
 Some gave her protection, others have brought her torment.
 Cyprus under Evagoras experienced her freedom,
 he ruled all over Salamis the most renowned kingdom.

Then beauty adorned all Cyprus, oh how did it shine,
 and they said that like Greece she looked alike that time.
 Later, others arrived in Cyprus, wave after wave,
 her cities felt the misery, the destruction was grave.
 Then to Cyprus came the Turk with such mania,
 and tyranny befell on our poor people.
 Destruction was followed, and agony and slaughter,
 dishonor has befallen then on mother and the daughter.
 Our bishops were hanged, our leaders slaughtered,
 our churches turned to mosques, our monasteries looted.

These days, how lucky we are to have English law and order;
 but then, the only thing we had was theft and plenty of
 plunder.

Before, they [Turks] greeted you with "hey you," an insult and
 a curse;

but today when the Englishman meets you in the streets,
 you see him how politely, as gentleman he greets.

Then, when the Turk met you on a horse he forced you to
 come down,

took your bread and money too, then climbed your horse, and
 gone;

What could the poor Christian do but run and follow behind?

And whenever in a village they went, a large one or small,
 they demanded turkeys, chickens, lamb and they ate it all.

These and many other torments Cyprus had to endure
 if I try to tell all, I will weep and never stop, for sure.

Then, Palesis turns back, once more, to the arrival of the British in 1878 and juxtaposes their rule and treatment of the Greeks to that of the Ottomans:

Then our Lord the merciful decided to redeem us
 from the Turk, the tyrant that is. And when the British came,
 God sent them to our island; His purpose was to free us.
 With great joy the Cypriots were greeting all the English,

celebrating their liberation from a rule that was Turkish.

So many good works the British rule has brought us;
long live our High Commissioner and his Ministers along,
long live Christian, our British Chief Engineer.
Much more good we are waiting we the Cypriots here,
from our new King, the English King that is.
And what we are also waiting from England to decide
is when our Cyprus with Greece will unite.⁷⁹

Palesis' 1901 poem as well as that of Tzapouras' in 1897 echoed what was published in the newspapers of the time, and in this regard folk poems and the press both reflect the same popular sentiment. It is evident that the Greek population welcomed the British and saw their rule as God-sent, aimed at liberating fellow Christians from Ottoman Muslim rule. At the same time, they had great expectations that British rule was a stepping stone to *Enosis*. It is for this reason that Palesis' poem makes it also clear that British rule, benevolent as it might have been, was not tantamount to freedom. Rather it was still a foreign rule that needed to be lifted so that Cyprus can finally be free. And freedom meant *Enosis* with Greece. That is precisely what Palesis meant in the conclusion of his poem:

And what we are also waiting from England to decide
is when our Cyprus with Greece will unite.

Up until the early 1920s, the Greek population, despite the repeated rejections of the demand for *Enosis* by the British government, continued to view England as the benevolent nation, a bastion of liberalism, which, eventually would accede to the *Enosis* demand. On the occasion of the centennial of the Greek revolution on March 25, 1921, the Church initiated a petition drive in every single Greek community on the island. Five hundred communities that included every Greek village or mixed village that had a church, and all city parishes signed the petition to England demanding

union with Greece. These petitions were bound in three volumes and were sent to the Greek government in Athens and to the British government in London. The cover of the bound volumes had the British flag over which the following was printed: "Cyprus to the British Government and the British Nation: The *Enosis* Petition for Union of Cyprus with Greece, March 25, 1921." An accompanying letter first stated the fact that 500 Greek communities in Cyprus "voted for *Enosis*" on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the Greek revolution. Britain was asked to look favorably to these petitions. The letter concluded as follows:

Your Excellency, we take this opportunity to repeat once more *our sentiments of love and gratitude* that we, as Greeks, maintain towards Great Britain, the great protector of the freedom loving Greek nation. We hereby express our conviction that the bonds which have been forged between Greece and Britain in the battlefields and united the two nations in the common cause of freedom, these bonds would secure the speedy realization of the just demand of the people of Cyprus.⁸⁰ (Emphasis added)

The letter was signed by the Archbishop Ethnarch Kyrillos III and the Greek deputies of the Legislative Council. As such, the accompanying letter represented the sentiments that still prevailed among the Greek population which continued to look up to Britain as the facilitator of national redemption. Thus, in 1921, forty-three years after British rule commenced, Cypriot Greeks expressed "love and gratitude" to Britain. A few years later, it became evident that these sentiments had undergone a gradual transformation.

On October 15, 1930, the British Undersecretary of the Colonies, Sir Drummond Seals, paid a visit to Cyprus. He was received with mixed feelings at best and with distrust at worst. The Greek population's sentiment was expressed by the most famous folk poet of the time, Christophoros Palesis. On the occasion of Sir Drummond's visit, Palesis composed a poem which he sent to the Undersecretary. It was entitled:

Στον Άγλον Υφυπουργόν Αποικιών
Ston Anglon Yfyπουργon ton Apoikion
 To the English Undersecretary of Colonies

You are welcome to this island Colonial Undersecretary of
 England,
 you are our freedom's precursor since you are Gladstone's
 descendant;
 we are welcoming you as an angel to this enslaved land
 perhaps you came to heal our wound bringing with you balm.

Our golden dreams
 that our enemy deems
 to be a "fairy tale,"
 time has come as we strive
 to bring all of them to life.

Our enslaved land is filled with the greatest joy
 and embraces you with open arms, all of us;
 please hear, feel, understand our own pain,
 listen to our grievances, don't let them go in vain.

Today, your arrival to our subjugated country
 has brought hope to our heart, creating a golden ray
 'cause you are a liberal nation, and a civilized one too.
 It's unbecoming, therefore, to keep us in servile state,
 us, a people not of your origin, language or race.
 We are people who are noble but poor and quite frail,
 our blood is drained, hardly moves, can barely circulate.
 There is nothing, really, for you to benefit or gain,
 so it is futile indeed, to keep us in such pain.
 And since we are asking to be free, this is our demand,
 like a mouse in front of you, a lion, the mighty one;
 then you, being a noble nation, powerful and tall,
 you, which cherishes liberty and freedom above all,
 why doesn't your heart show pity and compassion

to someone who is crying, begs you daily
 and tells you of his desire and of his deepest passion.

Our yearning it is this, an inextinguishable flame:
 We want union with Greece, Enosis is its name.
 They might give us the riches of all the earth
 shower us with diamonds up to our neck,
 but our will they shall never bend
 since union with Greece is our only end.

Nature can change, the horizon's signs too,
 the sea can turn around, mountains can move,
 but our feelings it's impossible to make them weak
 the Cypriots what they hold dear, they'll forever keep,
 and even when they arrive in Hades' realm,
 even there they'll shout "Enosis we demand."

Look into your own history, read and you will learn
 what Gladstone said and did and imitate him then;
 to the Ionian Islands gave liberty, set them free
 uniting genuine brothers, he did all this indeed.
 So, this is what we want, give us our freedom, and let it be,
 and if you set us free, our endless gratitude you'll see.
 Remain steadfast, be faithful to your own tradition
 so you can unite us with our mother, this is our mission,
 and a lesson you will be giving to this world's powerful.
 Then Cyprus will erect for you the greatest of statues
 and we'll stare at it and say "immortal you will stay,"
 for you liberated Cyprus in the year nineteen thirty.⁸¹

At the time Palesis composed this poem in 1930, Britain had ruled Cyprus for over half a century. By this time, two things had become clearer. First, that Britain was not willing to accede to the Greeks' demand of *Enosis* or meaningful self-government, and second, the economic conditions were deteriorating with farmers driven deeper into debt. Unlike his 1901 poem "Cyprus and its Admin-

istrations" whereby Palesis was effusive about British rule despite his mild criticisms, his 1930 poem assumed a completely different tone. He had no praise of British rule. He only expresses the hope that Britain, a liberal and freedom loving nation, would listen to the desire of the Greek population for *Enosis*. Even if the visiting Undersecretary of the Colonies promised the Cypriots all sorts of economic improvements, this would be immaterial to them, for union with Greece was sacred to them and they would take the *Enosis* ideal with them to the grave. In this way Palesis was expressing the sentiments not just of the peasants but of the Greek population at large. Indeed, union with Greece was placed above any material improvement British rule might have brought to the island because, as a British author put it, "*Enosis* was regarded by a majority of Greeks at any given time as the most important [issue]," and had solidified to such a degree that became "ineradicable."⁸²

Just one year following the visit to Cyprus by the British Undersecretary of the Colonies, the political frustrations of the Greek population as well the worsening economic conditions that were also associated to the global economic crisis due to the depression in America, led to a rebellion against the British. On October 21, 1931, there were widespread anti-British riots throughout the island. They started in Nicosia where demonstrators burned the Governor's Mansion to the ground, and spread to other cities and to the countryside. The colonial government put the riots down by force. Thousands were jailed or sent to administrative exile in remote villages, while strict censorship was imposed and the nationalist movement was suppressed throughout the 1930s. The situation changed in the wake of the Second World War.

Following the 1931 rebellion, and throughout the 1930s, the view of Britain as "perfidious Albion" tended to shape popular attitudes. During the Second World War, the first half of the 1940s, when the Greeks and the British were allies fighting Nazi Germany, the view of a "freedom loving and magnanimous British nation" tended to prevail. Then, from the late 1940s to 1959, the "perfidious Albion" again dominated popular sentiment. The British policy of "divide and rule" fomented discord between Greeks and Turks. Covert at

times and overt at others, this policy encouraged ethnic division and led to inter-communal bloodshed, during the EOKA campaign (1955–1959) especially. As such, the "divide and rule" policy, that favored the Turkish side facilitated the Turkish demand for the partition of Cyprus and led to increased Greek resentment.⁸³

Overall, the Greek population's attitude toward Britain, while fluctuating, remained ambivalent. This was best expressed by Lawrence Durrell, a giant of British literature and author of *Bitter Lemons*, his much celebrated yet highly controversial—for the Greeks—novel.⁸⁴ In fact, *Bitter Lemons* was not a novel. Rather, it was a chronicle and personal memoir of Durrell's four-year sojourn in Cyprus (1953–1956) where he served as a British government official in charge of the Public Information Office (1954–1956). Durrell concluded his *Bitter Lemons* with a conversation he had with a taxi driver in the summer of 1956, at the height of the EOKA campaign. The conversation took place in the taxi and as it was taking Durrell to the airport to depart from the island:

"You see" said the driver of the taxi. . "you see, the trouble with the Greeks is that we are really so pro-British."

"I don't follow you," I said absently.

"Even Dighenis" [EOKA chief] he said thoughtfully, "they say he himself is very pro-British."

It was one of those Greek conversations which carry with them a hallucinating surrealist flavor—in the last two years [1954–1956] I endured several hundred of them.

"Yes" he continued in the slow assured tones of a village wise-acre, "yes, even Dighenis, though he fights the British, really loves them. But he will have to go on killing them—with regret, even with affection."⁸⁵

The Greek population's ambivalence towards the British could not have been expressed more eloquently than the way a simple taxi driver uttered it to Lawrence Durrell. As Durrell put it, the taxi driver was "an elderly man with a grey mustache and a leisurely manner."⁸⁶ In his way, quite mysterious for his British pas-

senger who happened to be a literary giant, the taxi driver from Paphos, expressed folk wisdom. The Greeks did not hate the British *qua* British. What they hated was British policies over Cyprus, the "divide and rule policy" and the cynicism and hypocrisy of Great Britain, the liberal England and "freedom loving" nation they embraced along with Queen Victoria when Sir Garnet Wolseley, the first British High Commissioner, set foot on Cyprus on that hot July day in 1878. They entertained no animosity against the English; what they felt deep down was profound bitterness towards the "Perfidious Albion."

Notes

¹During the discussions at the Colonial Office in London there was no unanimity as to the strategic importance of Cyprus. See Sir George Hill, *History of Cyprus: The Ottoman Province, the British Colony, 1571-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), pp. 269-282.

²For a detailed account of the negotiations between Britain and the Porte that led to the transfer of Cyprus to Britain, see Hill, 269-304, 403-415.

³*Ibid.*, p. 412.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 464. For details on the Tribute question, see *ibid.*, pp. 463-487.

⁵*Ibid.* pp., 465-467.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 296.

⁷ Sir Garnet Wolseley kept a journal during the first seven months (July 18-December 31, 1878) of his tenure as Cyprus's High Commissioner. The purpose of the journal that covered his daily activities was to inform his wife Louise, who had stayed behind, until she joined him at the end of the year. Since Wolseley kept the journal strictly for his wife's perusal, it was a deeply personal narrative of his experience in Cyprus and reveals his deeper thoughts. That is why the journal contains open, and quite often, brutal criticisms of other British officers, Ministers and even members of the Royal family like the Duke of Edinburgh. The journal also contains, among others, Wolseley's honest impressions of the island and its people, the Ottoman rulers he was replacing and the Greek Orthodox Church. Not surprisingly, the public utterances of Sir Garnet were very different from the views he expressed in his journal. The original journal is kept at the British Record Office in Kew. It is owned by Sir Charles Wolseley who gave the permission to the Cultural Center of the Cyprus Popular Bank to publish an edited version of the journal. See, *Cyprus 1878: The Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley*, edited by Anne

Cavendish (Nicosia: Cultural Center of the Cyprus Popular Bank, 1991).

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹Sir Garnet Wolseley took part as a nineteen year old soldier in the Burma War (1852-1853) where he suffered a serious leg injury. He went on to fight in the Crimean War (1854-1856) where he lost one eye. Subsequently he found himself in India where he fought in the Indian Mutiny (1857-1859) and a year later he fought in the China War (1860). In 1861 and at the age of twenty-eight, he became Deputy Quarter Master General to the British Forces in Canada and in 1870 led the British campaign at Red River, in Manitoba, and crushed the Louis Revel rebellion. In 1873, he commanded the British expedition in West Africa, in today's Ghana, against King Koffe of Ashanti, defeating him and occupying Kumasi. In 1879, he became the commander of the British forces in Zululand, South Africa. He led the campaign against the Zulus, capturing King Cetewayo and defeating Chief Skukuni. In 1882, leading the British forces in Egypt, he crushed the rebellion of Urabi Pasha and ushered Britain's domination of Egypt for seven decades. Two years later, he commanded the Nile expedition (1884-1885), his only military failure, in an attempt to relieve General Gordon at Khartoum. See Wolseley, *Journal*, pp. 203-204.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 90, 98-99, 109, 116, 150, 156, 163.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 15, 17.

¹⁴See "Proclamation by His Excellency Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet Joseph Wolseley, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Her Majesty's High Commissioner of Cyprus," in *ibid.*, p. xiii.

¹⁵Sir Garnet Wolseley reported to London that in Larnaca he received an address from the Greek Archbishop

(Sophronios) but this is debatable. See Hill, *History of Cyprus*, p. 297.

¹⁶Wolseley, *Journal*, p. 10.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 55.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 70.

²¹Hill, *History of Cyprus*, p. 298.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 298.

²³Wolseley, *Journal*, p. 28.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 51-52, 119, 145.

²⁵Sir Garnet Wolseley described the exchange of visits in his *Journal*, pp. 27-28.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 33. See also Hill, *History of Cyprus*, p. 299.

²⁷On Nicosia being a filthy place when the British arrived, see Hill, *History of Cyprus*, p. 299. See also H. D. Purcell, *Cyprus* (London: Ernest Ben, Limited, 1969) p. 204.

²⁸Hill, *History of Cyprus*, p. 299.

²⁹Wolseley, *Journal*, p. 44.

³⁰Georgallides, "Ta Teleftea chronia tes Tourkokratias sten Kypro kai e metavivase tes nesou apo ten Tourkia sten M. Vrettania," (The last years of Turkish rule in Cyprus and the transfer of the island from Turkey to Great Britain) in *E Zoe sten Kypro kata ton 18 and 19 Aiona* (Life in Cyprus during the 18th and 19th Centuries), Lecture Series at the Popular University (Nicosia: The Municipality of Nicosia and the Cyprus Popular Bank, 1984), p. 21.

³¹Cited in G. S. Georgallides, *Cyprus and the Governorship of Sir Ronald Storrs: The Causes of the 1931 Crisis* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Center, 1985), p. 21.

³²*Ibid.* For the description of Nicosia and other cities by British officials see also Heinz Richter, *Istoria tes Kyprou, 1878-1949* (*History of Cyprus, 1878-1949*) (Athens: Estia, 2007), pp. 47-48.

³³A summary of travel descriptions by Dutch, British, Italian and Spanish visitors to Cyprus in the 18th and 19th centuries is found in Pavlos Flourentzos, "E Kypros mesa apo tes Taxidiotikes Entyposeis tou 18 and 19 Aiona," (Cyprus through Travelers Impressions in the 18th and 19th Centuries), in *E Zoe sten Kypro* (Life in Cyprus) pp. 248-264.

³⁴Wolseley, *Journal*, p. 33.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 33-39. See also, Hill, *History of Cyprus*, p. 299.

³⁶Wolseley, *Journal*, pp. 38, 40, 42, 43, 48, 57, 74, 75, 76, 82, 85, 86, 88, 91-92, 99, 103, 104, 148, 144.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 152.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 52. Evidently the term Sir Garnet used, "Zita's," meant "Zito," which means in Greek "Long Live."

⁴⁵Then blessing of the English flag at the Metochi church is depicted in an engraving that was published in *The Illustrated London News*, September 21, 1878. The engraving was entitled "The occupation of Cyprus: Greek priests blessing the flag at Nicosia." The engraving shows the Abbot, assisted by priests, raising the English flag on the church's mast while Sir Garnet Wolseley watched and as the crowd cheered. Copy of the engraving is found in Wolseley, *Journal*, p. 54. A similar engraving, a French one, was published in the *Paris Courier* in the second

half of 1878 and also depicted the blessing of the British flag by the Church. It was entitled *L'Occupation de l'Isle de Chypre par l'Angleterre: Le Pretres de l'Eglise Greque Benissant Le Drapeau Anglais a Nicosie* (The Occupation of the Island of Cyprus by England: The Priests of the Greek Church Bless the British Flag in Nicosia). Found in *E Zoe sten Kypro*, (Life in Cyprus) p. ix.

⁴⁶Wolseley, *Journal*, p. 52.

⁴⁷Georgallides, *Cyprus*, p. 23.

⁴⁸Georgallides, citing a British doctor. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁹Purcell, *Cyprus*, p. 297.

⁵⁰Wolseley, *Journal*, p. 50.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵²On Kitcheners's role in carrying out the mapping survey of Cyprus, see Appendix B, *ibid.*, pp. 185-196.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁵⁶Wolseley, *Journal*, pp. 88, 90.

⁵⁷See Andreas Sophokleous, "Oi Kypriakes Efimerides sto telos tou 19 Aionos" (Cypriot newspapers at the end of the 19th century," in *E Zoe sten Kypro* (Life in Cyprus), pp. 227-229.

⁵⁸Besides *Kypros* (1878) and *Neon Kition* (1879), several other newspapers were published including: *Phone tes Kyprou* (Voice of Cyprus) published in 1882; *Salpinx* (Bugle) published in 1883; *Alitheia* (Truth) published in 1884; *Enosis*, (Union), published in 1889; *Evagoras*, published in 1890; *Kypriakos Phylax* (Cypriot Guardian) published in 1890; *Neon Ethnos* (New Nation) published in 1893; *Kyprios* (Cypriot) published in 1900. See *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234. See also Stella Spyrou, *E mikra emon polis Kerynia, 1879-1912* (Our little town Kyrenia, 1879-1912), (Nicosia: Epiphaniou Publishers, 2005), pp. 581-585. Includes newspaper reports on the small port city of Kyrenia during the first three decades of British rule. Most references to newspapers of that period (1879-1912) are drawn from Spyrou's book.

⁵⁹Sophokleous, "Cypriot Newspapers," pp. 233.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 235-239.

⁶¹*Neon Kition*, Larnaca, February 6-18, 1881.

⁶²Author's translation. *Alitheia* (Truth), Larnaca, January 13-February 4, 1882.

⁶³Author's translation. *Neon Kition*, Larnaca, July 27, 1882.

⁶⁴*Enosis*, Larnaca, May 17-29, 1886.

⁶⁵Author's translation. *Phone tes Kyprou* (Voice of Cyprus), Larnaca, May 17-29, 1886.

⁶⁶See the report on the March 1885 visit to Kyrenia by the High Commissioner Sir Robert Biddulph. In *Salpinx*, (Bugle) Limassol, April 10, 1885.

⁶⁷See Constantinos G. Yiangoullis, "Laike Poiesi tes Kyprou" (Cypriot Folk Poetry) in *Anthologia tes Kypriakes Logotechnias* (Anthology of Cypriot Literature) (Nicosia: Chr. Andreou Publications, 1986), p. 267.

⁶⁸Theodoros Papadopoulos, *Text and Studies of the History of Cyprus: Social and Historical Data on Population (1570–1881)* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Center, 1965), p. 81. L.W. St John-Jones, *The Population of Cyprus* (London: University of London, Institute for Commonwealth Studies, 1983), p. 60.

⁶⁹The higher percentage in the urban Muslim population compared to the Christian, reflected the Muslim's ruling position up until 1878. As a consequence, Muslims constituted a larger number in the Ottoman bureaucracy. See St. Jones, pp. 124–126.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷¹Stylianios Spyridakis, *the Voice of the People: Mandinades of Crete* (New York: Pella Publishing Co., 2004) pp. 11, 12.

⁷²The closest Greek island to Cyprus, 140 miles northwest, is Kastellorizo, a tiny island located south of Rhodes.

⁷³See Menelaos Christodoulou and K. D. Ioannides, editors, *Kypriaka Dimodi Asmata* (Cypriot Demotic Songs), (Center for Scientific Studies, Nicosia: 1987), p. viii. This constitutes a voluminous work of 1004 pages and serves as a major source on Cypriot folk poetry and songs.

⁷⁴For this multiple role of folk poets, see Yiangoullis, "Laike Poiesi," in *Anthology*, p. 268.

⁷⁵Author's translation. Published in the weekly newspaper *Salpinx* (Bugle), Limassol, August 19, 1889.

⁷⁶For instance, 80 year-old Polykarpos Georgiou from the village of Argaki, could recite Tzapouras' poem, *O Apokefalismos ton Despotadon* (The Beheading of the Bishops) [on July 9, 1821]. Tzapouras composed the poem in 1911. It was recited by Georgiou in the 1970s and the recitation of the poem was published by Constantinos Yiangoullis, *Kyprioi Laikoi Poietes* (Cypriot Folk Poets) (Nicosia: Chr. Andreou Publications, 1982), pp. 636–639. This constitutes a monumental work and serves as indispensable source on Cypriot folk poetry.

⁷⁷Author's translation. *Ibid.*, pp. 632.

⁷⁸Christophoros Palesis, in Christodoulou, *Kypriaka Demodi Asmata* (Cypriot Demotic Songs), pp. 210–215.

⁷⁹Author's translation. *Ibid.* pp. 210–215.

⁸⁰Author's translation. The text of the letter is found in Ioannis Kasinis, *E Morphou kata tous Chronous tes Anglokratias, 1878–1959* (Morphou during the Period of British Rule, 1878–1959) (Nicosia: Epiphaniou Publishers, 2009), p. 122.

⁸¹Author's translation. In Christodoulou, *Kypriaka Demodi Asmata* (Cypriot Demotic Songs), pp. 356–357.

⁸²Purcell, *Cyprus*, p. 229 and p. 237.

⁸³On the British "divide and rule" policy and the subsequent encouragement of partition by Britain, see Van Coufoudakis, "The Dynamics of Political Partition and Division in Multiethnic and Multireligious Societies—The Cyprus Case." In Van Coufoudakis, ed., *Essays on the Cyprus Conflict* (New York: Pella Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 32–35; Heinz Richter, *Istoria tes Kyprou, 1878–1949* (*History of Cyprus, 1878–1949*) (Athens: Estia, 2007), p. 317; William Mallinson, *Partition through Foreign Aggression: The Case of Turkey in Cyprus* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs, XX, University of Minnesota, 2010), pp. 17–18. Theodore Couloumbis, "Defining Greek Foreign Policy Objectives," in Theodore Couloumbis and John Iatrides, editors, *Greek American Relations: A Critical Review* (New York: Pella Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 28–29; Robert Stephens, *Cyprus: A Place of Arms* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), pp. 137–156; Charles Foley, *Legacy of Strife, From Rebellion to Civil War* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964), pp. 30, 89, 119–129; Stanley Kyriakides, *Constitutionalism and Crisis Government* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), pp. 44, 137–140. On the question of partition and the diplomacy surrounding it, see Evanthis Hatzivasileiou, *Britain and the International Status of Cyprus, 1955–1959* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Mediterranean and Eastern European Monographs, XI, University of Minnesota, 1997), especially, Chapter III, "Partition Comes into the Picture: April 1956–1957," pp. 67–93.

⁸⁴Lawrence Durrell, *Bitter Lemons* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1957).

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁸⁶*Ibid.* p. 251.