

1.1. British rule

The increasing interest of Great Britain in expanding her commercial activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, coupled with political aspirations, resulted in the 1878 Cyprus Convention, under which the administration of Cyprus was handed over to the British Crown. Authority was exercised by the High Commissioner, who acted as president of both the Legislative and the Executive Councils. In 1914 the island was annexed to the British Empire and in 1925 was declared a Crown Colony; from that time the High Commissioner was referred to as the Governor of Cyprus.

According to the first census by the British in 1881, the population numbered 186,173 inhabitants (73.9% Greeks and 24.4% Turks), and 81.1% of the total lived in rural areas. In the following decades the population increased, but the percentage of the Turkish element declined, as a result of migration from 1878 onwards, and especially from 1923-26 with the declaration of Cyprus as a British colony (in 1931 there were 79.5% Greeks and 18.5 Turks). By 1960, when Cyprus became an independent Republic, the population had more than tripled, numbering 573, 566; 63.7% lived in villages and agriculture continued to be the main occupation. Under the British, the Armenian community of the island was particularly strengthened. The number of Armenians in Cyprus increased significantly after the massive deportations and the Genocide perpetrated by the Ottomans and the Young Turks (1894-1896, 1909 and 1915-1923). Over 10,000 refugees from Cilicia, Smyrna and Constantinople arrived in the island; about 1,500 of them made Cyprus their new home.

During the first fifty or so years of British administration, growth was very slow as was also improvement in the standard of living. People had to pay high taxation and under the burden of the 'tribute' economic problems remained unsolved. The same is true for political problems, since Britain did not satisfy either the constitutional or the national aspirations of the Greek Cypriots. However, major developments took place under British rule: the first priority of the new government was the improvement and expansion of harbour facilities and the inland communications network. Infrastructure included bridges, dams and the best road system in the Levant.

In addition, Cyprus was provided with a stable currency, a reliable administrative system and an efficient judicial system. Significant improvements also took place in health, including the establishment of hospitals. Education was reorganized. Britain left control of the education of

the Turkish minority in the hands of the Turkish Cypriots, and of the Greek-speaking majority in the hands of the Greek Cypriots. Thus, the schools for the majority followed the official Greek curriculum. Separate education in different languages and different religion were major factors, due to which the Greek and Turkish inhabitants of Cyprus preserved their identity and did not merge with one another though they continued to live side by side. The Armenians established their own schools, including the renowned Melkonian Educational Institute. It was built between 1924 and 1926 after the generous donation of tobacco trading brothers Krikor and Garabed Melkonian, initially to house about 500 orphans of the Armenian Genocide. It evolved from an orphanage (1926-1940) to a secondary school (1934-2005). The Armenian community also created associations, choirs, scout groups, sports teams and musical ensembles.

Under British rule Cyprus remained essentially an agricultural country, with over half her population deriving their main livelihood from the land. However, agriculture developed from the archaic practices of the mass of the peasant farmers to the application of modern scientific knowledge.

The move from manufactures to industries was also a slow process and, in fact, Cyprus has never become fully industrialized. The colonial government did not encourage industrialization. As a colony, the island was expected to export primary goods in exchange for industrial imports from Britain. Most successful industrial enterprises had foreign management or ownership. The existing small number of manufactures in ceramics, leather, textiles and silk weaving, suffered a decline during the first years of British rule, due to foreign competition. Yet, in the first half of the 20th century a wide range of small industries developed, mainly dependent on locally produced raw materials. As far as the spinning and weaving industry is concerned, a great variety of silk, cotton and flax fabrics of excellent quality were produced and sold in European, Near Eastern and local markets, notwithstanding the fact that the manufacture was conducted with a primitive method by means of hand-loom. A silk manufactory was established in 1926 in Geroskipou (Paphos District) on the most up-to-date lines, turning out fine quality silk. It operated till 1931, again during World War II and occasionally later on. A flax-processing plant was founded in the same place in 1932 and worked till 1956. The most prosperous industry was that of tobacco. In general, industrial output comprised almost solely the processing of agricultural products. Wine and spirits were the most important, also as export products. A positive measure in favour of all peasants was

the abolition of the tithes in 1926. Worth noting is the mining activity, which developed in the 1920s and particularly after World War II, and led to the emergence of an organized working class and trade unions.

In the course of the first half of the 20th century, the economic improvement which had started in the last decades of the 19th century continued despite two world wars and brought prosperity. Entry into modernity was marked by the application of science and by the introduction of technology. Being industrious people, the Armenians established themselves as merchants and craftsmen (potters, gold and silversmiths, calico printers, carpet makers etc.). They distinguished themselves as pioneering professionals such as photographers, printers and watch makers. They also introduced new dishes and sweets to the island. In general, they significantly contributed to Cyprus' socioeconomic and cultural development.

Closer contact with European and other countries, the expansion of trade and the introduction of modern facilities contributed to the rise of the standard of living and the quality of life. The government policy was trade orientated, and a wide range of foreign goods were consumed by a growing urban class. Muslins, cotton, linen, silk and woollen manufactures, yarn and thread, which were imported from the U.K. and its colonies, European countries, China and Japan, Egypt and Turkey, invaded the local market and affected both dress and household fabrics. Industrially processed threads were available for use even in traditional weaving, while chemical dyes altered the chromatic range of clothes.

More and more commercial advertisements for all sorts of local and imported industrialized products, among other goods fashionable clothing, fabrics and accessories, modern house equipment and machinery, appeared in newspapers and journals. Advertising also included the means of communication and transport, such as the telegraph and telephones, steamship lines and air communications, the Cyprus Railway, taxi services and buses, cars, motorcycles etc. The first car arrived in Cyprus from England in 1905, while the Cyprus Government Railway was in operation from 1905 to 1951.

The development of the means of transport as well as overall progress in the main productive sectors led to the gradual movement of population towards the towns. Urbanization has been a central feature of the 20th century. A growing middle class with people involved in many new occupations was formed in the urban centres; here also a new upper class emerged, different

from that of the past. Members of the new elite founded the first industries, promoted trade and occupied high administrative posts. They created a 'modern' lifestyle, lived in neoclassical houses equipped with western-style furniture, and were the first who donned 'Frankish' attire.

The new era left its imprint in the built environment, first of all in the towns, and was reflected in the appearance and behaviour of the inhabitants. British rule enhanced the Europeanization of Cyprus to a great degree.

At the same time, particularly in the 1920s, Europeanization became the main issue of the radical reforms in Turkey. Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Mustafa Kemal gave up Turkey's claims over areas inhabited by non-Turkish majorities (Turkish National Pact of January 28, 1920) and confined his actions to the national territory of Turkey as defined by the Treaty of Lausanne (signed on 24 July 1923). A central issue in Kemal's reforms was the further westernization of the appearance of his compatriots, who now were obliged to wear 'a civilized, international dress', worthy of their nation. The fez, 'the last symbol of Muslim identification' had to be replaced by the hat, 'the headgear used by the whole civilized world'. The Turkish Cypriot community was affected in several ways by the reforms in Turkey.

The last decade of British rule was marked by the national liberation struggle of the Greek Cypriots against colonial rule and for union with Greece (1955-1959). The struggle ended in 1959 with the Zurich-London agreements. A year later, in 1960, Cyprus became an independent republic. Independence opened new horizons and accelerated progress.

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