

The Economy as an Issue in the Middle Eastern Press

edited by

Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Martin Strohmeier

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Economic issues in the Turkish-Cypriot Press 1891-1931

By MARTIN STROHMEIER (Nicosia)

1. Introduction

This article attempts to shed light on the treatment of economic issues in Turkish-Cypriot newspapers during the years 1891-1931.¹ It does not deal with the economy proper, but rather presents opinions about the economy which were put forward in the press. The focus on this period has little to do with economic factors which would distinguish this period from earlier or later ones. Neither 1891 nor 1931 were breaks or turning points in the economic development of Cyprus or the island's Turkish community. Rather, the concentration on these years is due to the practical decision to utilize only the Turkish press in the Arabic script either available at the Press and Information Office (PIO) in Nicosia or accessible in latinized (and partly modernized) transliterations.² However, there is also a historical reason for choosing this period as it coincides with the first phase of the Cyprus problem (1878-1931) and the emergence of a Turkish-Cypriot nationalism – both developments which are not without economic ramifications.³

¹ For an overview of the press of that period see Strohmeier, Martin (2004): "The Ottoman press and the Turkish community in Cyprus (1891-1931), in: Unbehau, Horst (ed.): *The Middle Eastern Press as a Forum for Literature*. Frankfurt/M. (Heidelberger Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des modernen Vorderen Orients, 30), 249-274.

² These transliterations are collected in the reader edited by Ahmet An (2006): *Kıbrıs Türk toplumunun geri kalmışlığı (1892-1962)*. Girne.

³ Zervakis, Peter (1998): "Historische Grundlagen", in: Grothusen, Klaus-Detlev/Steffani, Winfried/Zervakis, Peter (eds.): *Südosteuropa-Handbuch, VIII: Zypern*. Göttingen.

Although there is no lack of articles related to the economy, it cannot be said that these issues dominate the press.⁴ This concurs with the fact that in general sources and studies on the economy of Cyprus during colonial rule are rather limited in number and scope. Most of the articles referred to below, belong to the category of commentaries or “special notes” (*ifāde-i mahşūşa*)⁵ aiming not only at informing the readership, but also at shaping public opinion. The relatively few articles which just contain facts and figures have been disregarded. Newspaper issues were chosen at random; the aim was to cover several papers and several weeks of their publication. Newspapers examined included the following:

Zamān 1-28 (25 December 1891-1 July 1892); 390-394 (1 December 1899-29 December 1899)

Yeñi Zamān 1-28 (22 August 1892-27 February 1893)

Ḳıbrıs (continuation of *Yeñi Zamān*) 29-69 (6 March 1893-25 December 1893)

Sünūḥāt 1-12 (1 October 1906-27 December 1906)

İslām 1-37 (18 April 1907-26 December 1907)

Ḳıbrıs (probably refoundation of the paper *Ḳıbrıs* referred to above) 17-37 (19 January 1914-9 November 1914)

Birlik 253-263 (2 February 1929-20 April 1929)

Seyf 1/113-12/113 (12 August 1929-30 October 1929)

Articles which are not included in the above papers and referred to below, were accessible through An's reader.

2. The Turkish press in Cyprus

The first preserved Turkish newspaper in the Arabic script, *Zamān*, appeared in 1891, a dozen years after the introduction of the first Greek newspaper *Neon Kition*. Until 1931, 18 newspapers were established, some of them short-lived, some published over a considerable period of time given contemporary limitations such as economic restrictions and censorship. Among the more enduring are *Zamān* (1891-1900), *Mir'āt-i Zamān* (1901-1910) and *Söz* (1919-1931). No pa-

70. Moreover, in 1930 the Ottoman Press Law was abolished and substituted by a British statute which created new conditions for the publication of newspapers.

⁴ An indication of relatively little interest in economic affairs can be concluded from the fact that until 1924 no paper used the attribute *iktisādī* (economic) in its subtitle. The first paper to use that attribute was *Birlik*. *Ḳıbrıs müslümānlarının fā'idesine çalışır, dīnī, iktisādī, içtimā'ī ve siyāsī...gazete*, founded in 1924.

⁵ Almost all of these articles are not signed so that one can only speculate that the editor of the paper was the author.

pers were published from September 1900 to April 1901 and 1915 to 1919. The gradual introduction of the Latin script (starting in 1929) took several years and it was not before the mid-thirties that all newspapers appeared in that script.⁶

The Ottoman-language press in Cyprus was started while the island was under British rule and therefore had ceased to be, strictly speaking, Ottoman territory. However, the sovereignty over the island technically remained with the Sultan until 1914, when Cyprus was annexed by Great Britain. Until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Cypriots regarded themselves as loyal subjects of the Sultan. From the end of the 1920's onwards many Turkish Cypriots began to orient themselves to the Republic of Turkey in their thoughts and feelings.

Around the same time, the movement of the Greek Cypriots for union with Greece (*enosis*) and opposition against British rule had reached a first peak, marked by the failed revolt of 1931. While Greek-Cypriot influence on colonial institutions increased, the Turkish administrative elite lost their privileged status. In comparison to the Turks, the Greeks⁷ were a prosperous element thanks to their numerical and economic strength as well as their greater cohesion. In this situation, Turkish-Cypriot newspapers assumed an important function. They tried to intensify communication and develop a sense of belonging to the "imagined community". This included also the preoccupation with the "Other", the Greeks: their struggle for the "Great Idea" (*megali idea*) and their economic and educational lead over the Turks.

3. The economy in Cyprus during the British period

In order to evaluate the treatment of economic issues in the island's Turkish press, it is appropriate to have a brief look at the economy of Cyprus in the Ottoman and the first decades of the British period. When the Ottomans took over Cyprus in the second half of the 16th century, the once flourishing economy of the island had stagnated. In the Ottoman province of Cyprus (1571-1878) the overwhelming majority of the population – Greeks as well as Turks – were engaged in agriculture. A considerable part of the land was owned by monasteries many of whose products were exported to Europe by European and Greek merchants. Heavy taxation, the competition from imports of industrial mass products from Europe and the decreasing importance of the Eastern Mediterranean in European trade du-

⁶ Even as late as 1934 at least parts of certain papers such as *Ma'sûm Millet* were still in the Arabic script.

⁷ From now on the terms Greeks and Turks refer to Greeks and Turks in Cyprus. At times, the Turkish press used also the terms Christians for the Greeks and Muslims for the Turks.

ring the 18th and 19th centuries had negative effects on the economy of the island. When Cyprus became British, it had to import most non-basic consumer goods.⁸

Whereas Greek-Cypriots were the dominating element in commerce during Ottoman rule, the Turks constituted the main-stay of civil and military administration. This “economic division of labour”⁹ continued without significant changes into the first decades of the British period (1878-1960). Still 4/5 of the population – both Greeks and Turks – lived as farmers in rural areas. By 1927, 73% of landowners were in debt to moneylenders (mostly Greeks), leading to forced sales.¹⁰ Adding to the dismal situation of the peasants was the fact that they had to bear most of the tax burden which flowed into the “Cyprus tribute”, which Britain had agreed to pay the Ottoman Empire.¹¹ It was only towards the end of the period under review here that the situation of farmers improved gradually. The tribute was abolished in 1926 and a cooperative system which also granted loans began to gain a foothold. The establishment of an Agricultural Bank, discussed for many years, was realized only in 1925.¹² Both population elements, though in different numbers and specializations, were engaged in crafts, e.g. as leather workers, carpenters and tailors.¹³ Although after the revolt in October 1931 in which the Turks did not participate, fines were only imposed on the Greeks, the Turks were still worse off. The vast majority of the Turks were poor and for the most part illiterate peasants. Even lower-ranking Turkish government officials (such as policemen) were already counted among the upper strata of the Turkish community. In contrast to the Turks, among the Greeks there was a group of wealthy people (merchants, landowners), while the number of prosperous Turks could be counted on the fingers of one hand. But even well-to-do Turks such as Münir Bey and Mehmed Necāfī were not engaged in the lucrative foreign trade.¹⁴ Nevertheless, advertisements in the Turkish press suggest that shopkeepers, commercial firms and manufacturers abroad believed that Turkish customers had an interest and the financial means to buy their merchandise.

⁸ Hansjörg Brey (2006): “The Cypriot Economy under British Rule and the Economic Heritage of the British Period”, in: Faustmann, Hubert/Peristianis, Nicos (eds.): *Britain in Cyprus. Colonialism and Post-Colonialism 1878-2006*. Mannheim und Möhnesee (Peleus, Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Griechenlands und Zyperns, 19), 431-443.

⁹ Zervakis (1998), 56-57.

¹⁰ Brey (2006), 432. Richter, Heinz A. (2004): *Geschichte der Insel Zypern. Teil 1: 1878-1949*. Mannheim und Möhnesee (Peleus, Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Griechenlands und Zyperns, 29), 175.

¹¹ Brey (2006), 431 f.

¹² Richter (2004), 179. This observation is in contrast to advertisements of the “Agricultural Bank of Cyprus” (Kıbrıs Zirā‘at Bankası) already in 1906 that it would give credits to farmers and artisans, cf. *Sünūhāt* 3, 13 October 1906.

¹³ Zervakis (1998), 71 f., 74 f.

¹⁴ Richter (2004), 352.

Even towards the end of British rule, there were still no smokestacks to rival minarets and church steeples on the skyline of the island's few cities. However, the economy picked up after World War II, leading to rapid change in the lifestyle of some, although traditional habits and ways of life continued to exist.¹⁵

4. The state of the economy: who is to blame?

Articles dealing with this subject look back with nostalgia to the period before the arrival of the British when the Turks had a substantial share in the commerce of the island – an assertion which is not substantiated and which would be difficult to prove. But writers taking up the subject were not so much interested in relating historical facts as in invoking the proverbial “good old times”. Therefore, there is the appeal to revive the position once (allegedly) held in trade.

In general, the press blames the Turks for a lack of initiative in the economic sphere. This is true for all branches of the economy, agriculture, commerce and crafts; especially traditional crafts such as leather working and weaving are carried out in an outmoded and time-consuming way involving high costs so that customers give preference to European products. This has led to a collapse of production: “It cannot be denied that our government has provided the protection to which it is obliged. But unfortunately it is necessary to concede that the degree of inclination and interest which our population has displayed is very limited, it is even almost nothing. However, efforts for the protection of crafts on the island must be shown rather by the population than by the government... In sum, there is no doubt that the exclusion from progress results from the laziness of our population”.¹⁶ Another writer does not go so far as to make the inertia of the Turks responsible for the backward state of their economy, but believes that the reason for the ineffectiveness of industry is due to the fact that the technical skills of the craftsmen are limited or even nil.¹⁷

In yet another article, the opinion is put forward that the Turks have not paid sufficient attention to commerce and that their laziness has caused the present situation. The “pressure” and “autocracy” of the government are not decisive factors, but only additional factors contributing to the present negative picture of com-

¹⁵ According to Lawrence Durrell, already in the 1950's it was possible to encounter "...a Cypriot version of the small-car owner... smoking a pipe and reverently polishing a Morris Minor...the townsman's standard of living roughly corresponded to that of a Manchester suburb". *Bitter Lemons*. London 1957. Repr. 1986. 34.

¹⁶ *Kıbrıs* 35, 24 April 1893.

¹⁷ *Kıbrıs*, 24 September 1894, latinized by Yetkin, Sabri (2001): “Türkçe Basımında Milli İktisat-Milli Burjuvazi Yaratma Çabaları: İstibdat'tan Meşrutiyet'e”. *Güzelyurt Tarih Buluşması (3-4 Nisan 2001)*, *Bildiriler*. Letkoşe, 73-74, quoted in An (2006), 6.

merce.¹⁸ The attitude of expecting everything from the state is wrong; rather, the writer argues, the interference of the government is not even desirable. More specifically, criticism is directed at “our rich classes” which must stop locking up their cash in banks and safes, must invest and abandon their “lassitude”.¹⁹ “Our intelligent and rich people” are reminded of their responsibility for the community by appealing to them to strengthen the position of the Turks in trade in the name of “patriotism”.²⁰ Another article puts the blame for lagging behind in terms of the economy on “religious functionaries” and “leaders of the community”.²¹

The many shortcomings exhibited by the Turks are summarized in the drastic statement: “There exist neither education, nor crafts, nor agriculture, nor union, nor assistance”.²² However, this entirely negative view is not shared by everyone. The contention that crafts are virtually non-existent and that agriculture is “useless”, is contradicted in an article pointing out that crafts do actually exist, but that there is a lack of encouragement.²³ In a leader in *Yeñi Zamān* a more positive view is expressed to the effect that change and progress have taken place, especially in agriculture when compared with its state a century ago.²⁴

5. The economy, especially commerce as a civilizing force and the role of the state

Much effort is made to draw attention to the economy as an important factor not only for the prosperity and civilization of a country, but also as an instrument of power. In particular, commerce is regarded as one of the main driving forces in the lives of nations; in fact, nations which have strong commerce and crafts thrive, whereas nations without these pillars of the economy are doomed to extinction.²⁵ Commerce is seen as one of the “sources of comfort and prosperity” not only of individuals, but also of the society; furthermore, it secures revenues for the state and forms the basis of wealth. Commerce ensures that “...a country is being built up and becomes civilized”.²⁶ The civilizing effects of economic activity include

¹⁸ *Zamān* 287, 3 December 1897.

¹⁹ *Ḳıbrıs*, 24 September 1894 (see note 16).

²⁰ *Zamān* 287, 3 December 1897.

²¹ *Mir'āt-i Zamān*, 20 May 1907. Yetkin (2001), 80-81, quoted in An (2006), 11-12.

²² *Ḳıbrıs* 4 February 1895. Yetkin (2001), 74-75, quoted in An (2006), 7.

²³ *Ḳıbrıs* 24 September 1894 (see note 17).

²⁴ 9, 17 October 1892.

²⁵ *Mir'āt-i Zamān* 20 May 1907. Yetkin (2001), 80-81, quoted in An (2006), 11-12. Cf. *Ankebūt* 30, 2 April 1921. Yetkin (2001), 51-52, quoted in An (2006), 32-33: “Indolence in commerce is tantamount to annihilation”.

²⁶ “Ticāretle bir memleket imār edilir, kesb-i temeddün eder”, *Sünñihāt* 5, 2 November 1906.

the elimination of poverty and the creation of “happiness”; economic activity “gives taste to life”. In a letter to the editor of the paper *İrşād* a reader formulates: “The rank of a nation is measured by its economic strength. Economic strength which rules the whole world is nurtured by two things, by two sources: craft and commerce...”.²⁷

“Confidence and security” are crucial for business transactions (“...emniyet ticā-retiñ hayāt-i ma‘nevīyesidir”). Merchants must trust each other in order to carry out their business; if this basic condition is not guaranteed, commerce is ruined. One of the immanent dangers of commerce is its interdependence: if a merchant with a large capital goes bankrupt, other merchants doing business with him might be affected and go bankrupt as well.²⁸

The effects of commercial activities are visible in places where commerce flourishes. If a city becomes a centre of trade, it acquires street cars, courts, markets, and roads.²⁹ The writer does not consider to what extent these institutions and means are a necessary precondition for the emergence of commerce. Such a view is developed in an article in *Yeñi Zamān*, where it is argued that the development of trade is dependent on the establishment of railways and other means of transport. Specifically, railways in Cyprus would be of great help in the delivery of agricultural produce to the markets, thereby taking over the function of animals and carriages.³⁰

As regards the role of the state in commerce, the author of an article in *Sünūhāt* appears to be a follower of the principle of the free play of forces as propagated by classic English economics which takes the view that free trade without state interference, protection and customs barriers secures the best possible prospering of the economy. He argues: “When a state protects merchants on its territories, commerce declines accordingly; when commerce is exposed to risk, it progresses accordingly...The principle of exposing domestic commerce to risk, guarantees not only that domestically manufactured goods are improved and advanced, but also that the import of foreign goods gradually stops”.³¹

²⁷ 17, 1 October 1921, latinized by Harid Fedai, “Eski basınıımızdan”, *Kıbrıs* 24 March 1997, quoted in An (2006), 37.

²⁸ *Sünūhāt* 5, 2 November 1906.

²⁹ *Sünūhāt* 5, 2 November 1906.

³⁰ 11, 31 October 1892. Railways were built in Cyprus between 1905-1915, see Radford, Michael (2003): *The Railways of Cyprus*. Nicosia.

³¹ 5, 2 November 1906.

6. Education and professional training as a precondition for economic development

Education is seen as essential to any improvement of the economy.³² Schools should prepare pupils for activities in related professions.³³ The economic backwardness of the Turks in Cyprus can be overcome by acquiring science and industry in the relevant schools.³⁴ The cure for the “humiliating” situation of the Turks can be found in commerce and crafts which are in turn dependent on education.³⁵ The opening of agricultural, commercial and other vocational schools will serve not only the economy, but progress in general.³⁶ In a strange metaphor crafts and commerce are likened to twins and education to their baby.³⁷

In a pedagogical exhortation to his “brothers in the villages”, probably penned by Hāfiẓ Cemāl, the connection between education and making a living is addressed. According to Cemāl, the present age is the age of literacy, of working, making money and earning a living. In fact, the ability to read and write is a prerequisite for the progress of the nation as well as of the individual. He compares the money spent on education for their children to money deposited in a bank in order to earn interest. Not only does the son of the villager who acquires a leaving certificate become an *efendi* and get a position, but also his parents will live comfortably during their old age. The implication is that education not only helps in getting jobs and climbing up the social ladder (from the villager to the *efendi*), but also serves as a kind of “social security” for the older generation.³⁸

Ignorance, observes Hāfiẓ Cemāl, prohibits finding work and administering their property resulting in peasants becoming the servants of merchants. Equipped with schooling, however, people from rural areas would be able to carry out any kind of work. He points out that the superior education of Greeks and Jews has enabled

³² *Kitbrus*, 24 September 1894, see note 17.

³³ *Zamān* 4, 3 January 1892; *Zaman* 12, 28 February 1892.

³⁴ *Yeñi Zamān* 7, 3 October 1892.

³⁵ *Mir'āt-i Zamān*, 20 May 1907 (note 21).

³⁶ *Mir'āt-i Zamān*, 30 November 1908, Yetkin (2001), 81-82, quoted in An (2006), 13-14.

A campaign for the establishment of a commercial school (*ticāret mektebi*) was carried out by Doctor Hāfiẓ Cemāl in his paper *İslām* in 1907, e.g. 5, 16 May 1907. Hāfiẓ Cemāl (1878-1967) is one of the more prominent personalities of the Turkish-Cypriot community. A doctor by profession, he strove to enlighten the people. He left the island in 1909 for Turkey, returning only for occasional visits, see Harid Fedai (2001); *Dr. Hafiz Cemal Lokmanhekim. Anı-Yaşantı*. Istanbul.

³⁷ *Ankebüt* 38, 28 May 1921, Yetkin (2001), 53, quoted in An (2006), 35.

³⁸ *İslām* 2, 25 April 1907.

them to acquire most of the wealth of the island. That supremacy is reinforced, in the case of the Greeks, by their unity and solidarity which they owe to a large extent to their newspapers. Cemāl ends his call to his “brothers in the villages” with the following demand: “We must work because God loves the hard-working and the educated more than the ignorant!”³⁹

In the context of education as a precondition for economic development the popular perception and practice of crafts in Cyprus is criticized. According to the writer, a craftsman (e.g. a shoemaker or a smith) is someone who at the age of 10 or 15 (implying that this youth has not completed school or perhaps never attended school) joins a master (*usta*) and tries to learn from him as much as possible. Later, the former apprentice opens his own business. In this way, the author suggests, only “imperfect knowledge” is generated and handed down to the next generation.⁴⁰

7. Choices of occupation: “freedom” of the merchant versus “slavery” of the government employee

A merchant (*tüccār*) is defined as someone who buys and sells with the objective of making a profit.⁴¹ The *tüccār* is portrayed as the “homo oeconomicus islamicus” par excellence; his activity is blessed because the prophet Muḥammad himself was a merchant.⁴² A merchant’s profits are increased when the state ensures protection, esp. in the case of foreign trade.⁴³ Conversely, the state to whom the merchant belongs benefits from his business in the form of taxes.⁴⁴

In spite of the opportunities for profit and the “freedom” of the merchant, his profession hardly enjoys recognition in Cyprus. People believe that to engage in commerce is beneath their dignity. Therefore, nobody takes up this occupation; instead every school graduate becomes a civil servant.⁴⁵ Merchants are free because they do not have to obey anybody, are not under an obligation to anybody, and do not have to behave in a fawning way. In contrast to these benefits of the merchant class, the *memur* is a “poor devil” and even a slave who is constantly under

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Yeñi Zamān* 17, 12 December 1892.

⁴¹ *Sünühāt* 5, 2 November 1906.

⁴² *Sünühāt* 6, 8 November 1906.

⁴³ *Sünühāt* 5, 2 November 1906.

⁴⁴ *Sünühāt* 6, 8 November 1906.

⁴⁵ “Anıñ artıq dünyāda en büyük ārzūsu, bir qaleme intisāb, bir dā’ireye devāmdan ‘ibāret kalyor”. *Sünühāt* 6, 8 November 1906.

pressure and must justify himself if he comes only two minutes too late.⁴⁶ A civil servant does not earn enough money and so is not able to adequately support his family. This not only affects families, but, on a larger scale, leads to the ruin of “Muslim wealth”. A *memur* can never live as comfortably as a merchant who is able to build a capital in order to support his family.⁴⁷ Moreover, commerce “...allows people to taste the pleasures of life; people who deal with commercial transactions appreciate what life is and know the value of time as they spend all their time permanently in blessed activities...”.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the writer insinuates, a happy and comfortable life is only possible if one becomes a merchant, a profession which ensures status and recognition, dignity and honor.

Economic activity as described here is thought to have an influence on people to the extent that their behaviour is affected and that an economic way of thinking takes hold of them, e.g. to be careful with one’s time (“time is money”). The author tries to arouse sympathy for the civil servant, who is subjected to a strict recording of time worked. On the other hand, although he states that merchants are “permanently” at work, he does not seem to notice that merchants, too, are subject to measured time. This somewhat idealized image of a merchant integrating Islamic values of piousness and free enterprise underestimates his financial risks and emphasizes his freedom.

An article in *‘Ankebūt* states that because Turks have always been civil servants, other professions have been neglected.⁴⁹ This assertion somewhat contradicts the opinion referred to above that Turks had a significant role in trade before the arrival of the British. A change in the attitude of the Turks towards an engagement in commerce is observed after World War I when a “commercial spirit” grew among them and when the business of a merchant became a profession demanding knowledge and training.⁵⁰ In 1934, four Turkish trade houses were counted, three of them having been established recently; this growth is characterized as an encouraging sign.⁵¹

⁴⁶ “Öyle bir esâret ki vaqt-i mu‘ayyenini iki daқиқа geçerse jurnala kayd etmek ve sebeb-i meşrû‘ göstermek mecbûriyetindedir”, *Sünûhât* 6, 8 November 1906.

⁴⁷ *Sünûhât* 7, 15 November 1906.

⁴⁸ *Sünûhât* 5, 2 November 1906.

⁴⁹ 38, 28 May 1921, Yetkin (2001), 53, quoted in An (2006), 34-35.

⁵⁰ *Haber* 5, 5 November 1934, An 55-56.

⁵¹ *Haber* 13, 3 December 1934, An 57-58.

8. Greek Cypriots as economic models and obstacles to Turkish economic development

Greeks are depicted in an ambivalent way. On the one hand, they serve as an economic model to be imitated, on the other hand they are seen as an enemy or an obstacle to Turkish economic development. The point of departure for many observations is that the Turkish population has remained behind the Greeks in terms of wealth and participation in the economy. Profits from commerce go almost completely (95%) to Greeks. Whereas there are approx. 30 to 40 Greek merchants, the number of Turkish merchants does not exceed five, and the latter's businesses are quite limited in comparison with the former's. This supremacy of Greek merchants is traced back to the "change of administration" from the Ottomans to the British, when, as the author states, trade fell increasingly into the hands of the Greeks. The dominant position of the Greeks in commerce has led to the situation that Turks have to buy from Greek merchants.⁵²

The fact that Greeks dominate business and own most shops makes Turks inevitably customers of Greeks; in this way they "support" the Greeks.⁵³: "Our farmers and craftsmen work day and night producing all kinds of products which then our Greek rivals send abroad in shiploads. That means that for our rival business accomplished is easy and gained without turning a finger. They (the Greeks, MS) are instrumental in our consumption and production. People knowledgeable in commerce know that intermediaries are in a more comfortable position than producers; the former's positions are always solid and their profits proportionately higher...The Greek (sic!) has always sought to profit from the Turk (sic!). He has secured his present wealth and comfort thanks to the Turks. On the other hand, the Turk (sic!) has never caused any damage to the Greek".⁵⁴

Most probably this rather negative characterization of Greeks as "rivals" doing "damage" to the Turks, living as it were at the expense of the hard-working Turks, is due to the political context of the period. In 1921 Turkish Cypriots were, of course, aware of the Greek-Turkish War in Anatolia supporting the Turkish cause. The conflict had a bearing on the relations of Greeks and Turks in the island. There is an even more aggressive stance in another article in the same newspaper: "Our rivals...have not officially declared war on us. But the defensive means

⁵² *Zamān* 287, 3 December 1897.

⁵³ "Türkler Rûmların muzâhîridir", *Ankebût* 37, 21 May 1921, Yetkin (2001), 53-54, quoted in An (2006), 34.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Cf. also the following statement: "Our rivals living on the same soil have always made a different and distinct effort; their first goal was always to work and to make a living. They have searched for and found the principle of earning their living not in government offices, but in crafts and trade", *Ankebût* 38, 28 May 1921, Yetkin (2001), 53, quoted in An (2006), 34-35.

which they use against us are quite terrible and destructive. Numerous farms inherited from our forefathers, piles of innumerable riches were lost as a result of those terrible and destructive measures... This situation causes terrible destruction to the property of Muslims and damages the existence of the Turks on the island. These bitter realities... must encourage and direct us to work with all our strength against the enemy on the economic front... The most important patriotic duty is to preserve the property of the Muslims... It is not sufficient to protect our country only politically, it is also necessary to secure its majority⁵⁵ economically".⁵⁶ Furthermore, the image conjured up is that of the inventive and clever Greeks who "...gave credits to Turkish merchants in order to accustom us (the Turks, MS) to their cigarettes and in this way deliver a blow to Turkish cigarette producers...". The Greeks, according to the article, even go so far as to conceal from the Turks the crafts of builders and blacksmiths so that they could not work in these professions.⁵⁷

Over the following years the tone in which economic relations of Greeks and Turks are described, varies. On the one hand, Greeks are addressed as "our neighbours".⁵⁸ On the other hand, Turkish peasants are presented as victims of the "greed" of "Christian" merchants and moneylenders to whom Turks were in debt; in many cases, these illiterate farmers are not able to understand the debt certificates.⁵⁹ A decade later, parallel to the *détente* between Greece and Turkey, tension between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus had eased: "There is no need to be an inventor in order to make a living on the island. It is enough to imitate what our Greek Cypriot compatriots have done".⁶⁰

A concomitant of the treatment of the Greeks as model and rival in the economy is the demand for economic self-reliance respectively an economy centered on the Turkish community. One way to build economic independence is to buy only from Turkish merchants.⁶¹ Another step in building a Turkish economy in Cyprus would be the transformation of pious foundations ("the only capital of the Mus-

⁵⁵ The word used by the author is *ekseriyet* which does not make much sense if translated as "majority". What is meant here is probably "supremacy".

⁵⁶ *Ankebiit* 42, 25 June 1921, Yetkin (2001), 55, quoted in An 35-36.

⁵⁷ *Ankebiit* 71, 22 January 1922, Yetkin (2001), 56-57, quoted in An (2006), 39.

⁵⁸ *Birlik* 4, 1 February 1924, Harid Fedai: "Eski basınımızdan", *Kıbrıs* 21 June 1999, quoted in An (2006), 45.

⁵⁹ *Birlik* 18, 16 May 1924, Harid Fedai: "Eski basınımızdan", *Kıbrıs* 7 February 2000, quoted in An (2006), 48-49.

⁶⁰ *Haber* 14, 6 December 1934, quoted in An (2006), 58.

⁶¹ Cf. an advertisement of the shoemaker 'Aşım for his shop *Hilāl* in which he announces to his "religious brothers" that there would no longer be any need to buy at Greek shops; in this way "Islamic crafts" would be promoted, *Kıbrıs* 21, 16 March 1914.

lims”) into banks.⁶² İhâfîz Cemâl advocates keeping the money in Cyprus by buying only local products.⁶³ If products have to be purchased from abroad, priority should be given to Ottoman products, because Turkish Cypriots would share in Ottoman benefits (he does not explain how). Even concerning small purchases preference should be given to items produced by “religious brothers”.⁶⁴

A variant of the image of Greeks as exploiters of the Turks is discernible in an article written by the director of the high school (*idâdiye*) in Nicosia. Referring to a recent advertisement which he had come across (“bir kahve, iki sigara”), he concludes that if people would limit themselves to the consumption of these quantities, it would enable them to save money which could be spent on the establishment of consumer associations (*istihlâk şirketleri*). In this way, commission agents (*komisyoncu*), middlemen (*simsâr*) and brokers (*dellâl*) who are, in his mind, all “parasites” (*ıfeylî*) could be avoided. These merchant parasites try to get consumers to part with their money by means of “trumpery” (*yaldız*) such as decorative advertisements and nice boxes which increase the prices of products. A way to avoid such “bloodsucking merchants” is to establish consumer associations which could offer products at reasonable prices. At the end of the article there is a reference, if oblique, to the Greek identity of the “parasites”: “The sale of our clothes has always been a monopoly of the ones who do not belong to our nation”. The author wonders if Turkish merchants can provide a remedy.⁶⁵

9. Agriculture: “The mother of all crafts”

Agriculture was the most important branch of trade in terms of numbers of persons in gainful employment much into the first half of the 20th century.⁶⁶ Although identified as “our main source of livelihood”⁶⁷, it receives less attention than commerce or crafts. One of the points of discussion is the lack of knowledge about agriculture. It is pointed out that only sowing the seed and ploughing the land does not lead to produce. Farmers must know the right time for sowing and the most appropriate soil for a plant. Therefore, agriculture must be based on science. As it is impossible to communicate that knowledge to farmers, their children at least

⁶² *Birlik* 18, 16 May 1924. Harid Fedai: “Eski basınıımızdan”, *Kıbrıs* 7 February 2000, quoted in An (2006), 48-49.

⁶³ “Yerli mâlî kullanalım”, which most probably means Turkish products.

⁶⁴ *İslâm* 5, 16 May 1907.

⁶⁵ “Bârî Müslümân sermâyedârlarımız bu derdlerimize câresâz olsa”, *Kıbrıs* 5-30, 27 July 1914.

⁶⁶ İhâfîz Cemâl mentions that out of approx. 50.000 Turks in Cyprus, 30.000 to 40.000 were engaged in agriculture: *İslâm* 36, 19 December 1907.

⁶⁷ “bizim başlıca sermâye-i ma’îşetimiz”: *Yeñi Zamân* 1, 31 October 1892.

should acquire relevant knowledge at school, so lessons on agriculture should be added to the curriculum.⁶⁸

Ḥāfiẓ Cemāl holds the same opinion. He thinks that agriculture based on science would be the biggest stimulant for progress in Cyprus; model farms (*nümüne çiftliği*) established in the Ottoman Empire, should be introduced on the island as well.⁶⁹ Modern and traditional agriculture are referred to with the terms *yeñi usûl-i zirâ'at* ("new agricultural methods") and *eski usûl-i zirâ'at*. What distinguishes them mainly is the use of machines, technology and artificial fertilizers in the former. He explains the mode of operation of reapers in Europe and America which can reap daily up to 1.000 sacks (*çuvâl*) of wheat, a quantity that could be produced in Cyprus only in 5 to 10 years in the traditional way, just by using animals and manual work, concluding: "If we must work instead of one day 5-10 years, how can we advance?" The differences between the old and the new methods, as described by Cemāl, are enormous. In Cyprus farmers can only cultivate 1-2,5 *dönüm* per day with a pair of oxen yoked to a plough (*çift*). In Europe and America, on the other hand, machines can reap 10-50 *dönüm* per day.⁷⁰

Ḥāfiẓ Cemāl reminds the reader that inspite of all discoveries and inventions of mankind land and soil have not lost in importance. He regards agriculture as "the mother of all crafts".⁷¹ A nation which does not attach importance to agriculture, cannot advance its crafts. It is possible to live without some branches of crafts, but life without agriculture is inconceivable. Thus, important and frequently used means in certain crafts are in fact agricultural produce such as silk, cotton, timber, sugar and leather. Crafts essentially bring agricultural products into another form, e.g. they transform wood into timber, which carpenters cut into pieces, producing precious objects. Cemāl calls this the "creative forces" (*kuvve-i tekvînîye*) of agriculture. Strangely enough, Cemāl thinks that agriculture, in comparison to crafts is a relatively low-cost branch of trades as agricultural tools tend to be inexpensive and as there are hardly any expenses other than seed.⁷² This is surprising because he himself emphasises the low productivity of traditional agriculture in Cyprus and the increase of productivity by using machines whose purchase would be very costly. Besides, he does not mention that agriculture is dependent on factors such as the rigours of the weather and the infestation of pests.

⁶⁸ *Yeñi Zamân* 9, 17 October 1892.

⁶⁹ *İslâm* 2, 25 April 1907.

⁷⁰ *İslâm* 4, 9 May 1907; *İslâm* 36, 19 December 1907.

⁷¹ *İslâm* 2, 25 April 1907; *İslâm* 36, 19 December 1907.

⁷² *İslâm* 37, 26 December 1907.

10. Conclusion

This brief perusal of articles published over a period of 40 years can only serve as a preliminary and tentative indicator of the treatment of the economy in the Turkish-Cypriot press. Authors presenting economic issues “imagine” a more positive past regarding the participation of Turks in the economy of the island a premise which cannot be substantiated. The Turkish community is blamed for the lack of economic initiative in the British period. The main reason for their weak position is that due to the traditional choice of occupation as government officials they do not engage in commerce. Commerce is seen as a civilizing force in the lives of nations; the pursuit of profit as a merchant is advocated as an activity pleasing God. Recommendations to become not civil servants, but rather merchants represent a departure from traditional occupational patterns. Education and specialization in professions are considered as important factors in improving the Turkish position in the island’s economy. On the one hand, Greeks are held as examples to emulate, on the other hand they are rivals because of their success and strong economic position. One of the themes which receives remarkably little attention, is the issue of agriculture, although this was the sector in which the overwhelming majority of the Turkish Cypriots was active. In sum, the treatment of economic themes in the Turkish-Cypriot press reveals an insecure community, lacking confidence. The press attempted to provide a sense of direction and create an awareness of existing problems, although sometimes in a contradictory way. From the second half of the 1920’s onwards, advice, assistance and orientation were increasingly sought from Turkey, but this is a subject beyond the scope of this article.