

PART III

Reports on the Cyprus Situation

YOUTH IN SOCIETY

Th. P. Stylianou
Assistant Headmaster, Secondary Education

Before beginning my talk I feel the need to express my deep esteem and congratulations to the Commonwealth Secretariat for their initiative in giving us the chance to discuss with their excellent representatives the number one problem of our times: the problem of youth in its various aspects. I believe that the interchange of experience on sociological matters is very useful. Of course we do not expect that from this brief seminar we will find the ideal solutions for our youth problems, but we are sure that the addresses delivered here and the group discussions will give us the incentives for more realistic and effective study and confrontation of our problems. We believe that our guests with their specialized knowledge and wide experience of the problems to be discussed will reinforce our endeavour to see more clearly and face in practice without further delay, resolutely and boldly, our respective problems. Undoubtedly such endeavours encourage and promote study and research by governmental and non-governmental agencies.

With this conviction, I begin my talk on the topic:
"Youth in Society, with special emphasis on Cyprus".

Mr Arnold Smith, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, has given an epigrammatic image of society today. I quote: "Populations grow; they also grow younger. Social problems change; old restraints go".(1) I believe that these four short phrases describe in general the society of our times and in particular Cyprus society as well. Every day we see the absolute continuity of change in every single thing. Everything is in perpetual flux like a river. The change into contemporary society has been so rapid that it absolutely illustrates the view of the presocratic philosopher Heraclitus "that all things are in process and nothing stays still". And the same philosopher likening existing things to the stream of a river says: "You would not step twice into the same river."(2)

The problems of youth are not the same in content or in expression all over the world. They differ from one country to the other, because they are connected with historical, traditional and general cultural, economical and social factors, which differ

in the various countries. "But everywhere," adds the Commonwealth Secretary-General, "the root of the youth problem appears to lie in the understandable dissatisfaction of the rising generation with the established social and economic order. In the developing countries, this dissatisfaction takes on particular overtones because of its close link with the problems faced by the increasing numbers of young people who are emerging from a traditional way of life, but who find that the modern economy has not developed sufficiently to receive them and to offer them the opportunities to use their talents creatively and satisfyingly."(3)

Generally speaking, young people of today, with their revolution against the establishment, are bringing into question the very meaning of life and the accepted social order. The profound transformations in the thinking and actions that are being introduced by the young call for a re-examination of currently accepted values. Today we cannot passively observe the youth revolt. The young people are the future of the world and they make up more than half its population. We have a responsibility to take whichever measures will incite the youth to define its own role in society.

Before we proceed to the main topic, it will be useful to give brief definitions of the main concepts, because it is true, as Aristotle tells us, that the beginning of wisdom is the interpretation of the terms we use.

Greek thought, which is eternally young, will help us to comprehend the main elements of society and the social life of individuals. Plato in his Republic tries to answer the question "What is the nature of justice?", that is to say, "How are men to order their lives so as to live best?" This question leads to a new question: "What is to live well?" In actual fact, "What is to live well?" This is a decisive question. In order to examine with objective criteria the life of every human being, nowadays, this question is set before every thoughtful person. Today we usually go no further than the surface of things and when we speak about the young we usually criticize them without any inner examination of their attitudes to society. Plato, in his analysis of society and the way it is constructed, says that every man has wants, which he cannot get rid of, but which he cannot himself satisfy. As Spencer Leeson says (explaining the Theory of Education in Plato's Republic): "While all men need others, all men are, or may be, needed by others; the same limitation which forces the individual into society also makes him a useful member of it."(4) Therefore we reach the conclusion that "Each social element should do that which it is most fitted to do, thus contributing to the common stock the best that it has to give, and receiving from each

other element that of which it is itself most in need."(5) This reciprocity is the basic principle of life in society. This principle seems to be violated nowadays, and many evils in our society derive from contempt of the mutual obligations binding one group to another. As we shall see later on, the generation gap of today perhaps owes its existence basically to the violation of this principle.

And now we come to the second term - youth. Who may be considered young? There is no universally accepted definition. Usually when we speak of youth we mean one of the "age groups" of life. The word "youth" denotes a phase of life which begins at puberty and lasts ten, fifteen, or twenty years, depending on who uses the phrase and in what context. Furthermore, when we refer to the young from the point of view of social, economic and psychological aspects, the context of the term does not allow any pat general definition. This is the reason we accept here the view of a flexible statement: "That is why a compromise definition is often a pragmatic one: young people are those persons society deems young."(6) More clearly we might propose to consider a definition that the young person is he who, having arrived at puberty, is in a position to assume a specific role in the society wherein he lives. In this sense the period of youth has been growing continuously longer. During recent years the term "young" has been extended at both age-limits. Thus, for the purposes of this present study, under the term "young" I shall mean the ages from twelve to thirty. According to official statistics, the total youth population in Cyprus between the ages of 12 and 30, both sexes, amounts to 184,000. That is to say, the youth of Cyprus are 29% of the total population. Of these, 90,000 are male and 94,000 are female. There are, in fact, 4,000 more females than males. The Greek youth of Cyprus constitute 23.4% of the total population of our island (see Table I).

The young people of Cyprus may be classified according to the way they use their time, as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage of total youth population</u>
Pupils in secondary schools	42,000	26.4%
Students in foreign countries (approx.)	9,000	5.8%
Working youth	91,000	61.6%
Others (approx.)	9,000	6.2%

(see Table II)

As for the place of residence, the young people of Cyprus between the ages of 10 and 29 total 200,000. Of these, 77,000 live in the towns and 123,000 live in rural areas. The percentage is 38.5% in the towns and 61.5% in the rural areas (see Table III). According to the official statistics ten years ago the total number of pupils at the secondary school level was only 28,000, whereas during 1970-71 enrolment amounted to 42,245, i. e. there has been an increase of 51%.

The number of school leavers for all secondary schools has more than doubled in the last ten years and in 1969-70 reached the figure of 4,529. Of these, 28.6% were graduates of the Classical section, 33.9% of the Commercial, 15.1% of the Science, 15.7% of Technical and Vocational, 6.1% of the General and 0.6% of the Agricultural section.

It has been observed that during the last few years in the Public Secondary General Schools, more and more pupils choose to specialize in Science and Commerce instead of the traditional Classics. In 1965-66 the proportion of pupils according to specialization were: Classics 61.0%, Science 12.8% and Commerce 26.2%. In 1970-71 the respective proportions have changed to: Classics, 40.9%; Science 25.5%; and Commerce 33.6%.⁽⁷⁾

It is worth mentioning that the population of Cyprus between the ages of 1 and 29 in the course of the past 48 years has increased 92%.

And now to end with figures, which shed light on the future, however tiresome they may be, let us mention that according to the statistics, within the next decade the youth population is expected to increase by 18%.

I now come to the main point of my talk: what is the situation of youth today in Cyprus society?

It is true that as yet we have not done any research on this subject which affects the whole island. Nevertheless, excellent work has been done under the guidance of Mr B.K. Taylor and with the co-operation of the Cyprus Government's Department of Social Welfare Services and the Social Administration Department of the University College of Swansea. For this study, I have in mind the data from two other pieces of research: the first one was made among secondary school pupils of both sexes by myself, and the second was made among the working youth (up to 25 years old) by a labour union.

One of the most serious problems of our youth is that of vocational orientation. The young people usually believe that they do not have sufficient vocational counselling for their future.

In one of the pieces of research mentioned above 90% of the pupils said that they have this problem. Usually they connect this problem with unemployment, which proportionally is higher among youth than among adults. Statistics from 1970 show a total of 3,836 persons registered as unemployed in Cyprus. 1,635 persons out of these (or 42%) were young people under 25 years old. Most of the unemployed people are unqualified and unskilled youth and school-leavers. As a result of the lack of adequate capacity of the existing technical schools, the majority of the youth leaving the schools are without any profession. They are mainly interested in finding clerical work. In Cyprus there is a disproportion between the supply and demand of manual and clerical work. According to the Government's Second Five Year Development Plan, which was completed last year, in 1971 there was a shortage of about 11,000 manual and skilled workers in industry. On the other hand, there was an equal number of redundants among the school-leaving youth who were looking for clerical work because they did not have any vocational or technical training. This problem of unemployment, especially among secondary school graduates, continues to remain acute. The basic cause of this serious problem is not the one mentioned above. Social attitudes and deep-rooted prejudices towards manual and technical work encourage graduates to look upon "white-collar" employment as the best avenue for a career and social prestige. There is no quick solution to the problem; strong prejudices against manual work among parents and students need to be overcome. An effective Vocational Guidance Service to youth is of paramount importance if this is to be achieved. Nevertheless, the problem of unemployment has expanded during the last two years among the young graduates of universities as well.

Most of our young people complain that they have no social chances and social activities outside their family home. Others say that they feel oppressed by the adults. Most of them stated that they feel oppression at school as well as in society. A lower proportion stated that they are oppressed by their family. A high proportion of the secondary school pupils supported the view that there is a need for an up-to-date revision of the way our schools function and are administered.

As for the leisure-time activities at home, shared by the young people with other persons, the most frequent are the following: discussions with their parents, sisters and brothers,

listening to radio, reading magazines and newspapers, watching television, needlework.

Do the young sometimes disagree with their parents? The above mentioned research by Mr Taylor found that a high percentage of young people have several causes of disagreement. The figure reaches 94% of the boys, while the respective percentage of the girls is 70%. The most usual causes of disagreement between the young and their parents are: dress, especially in the case of the girls over, for example, the wearing of mini-skirts, and the running of the household. Parents frequently object to their daughters' going out for a stroll with friends or wanting to visit relatives, or to attend festivities and wedding parties. Usually there are disagreements about boys' leisure time activities such as staying out late at coffee-shops, and about requests for more pocket-money or about the way money is spent.

Life outside the family for our young people is not so richly varied, although they admit that they most enjoy doing things with their friends, away from their families, and outside their own homes. In this case they usually go for walks, play indoor and outdoor games (especially football), if they have a playground. In the villages especially, the boys frequent the coffee-shops; girls have more restrictions than the boys as far as concerns going out of their homes. Girls usually meet friends in their homes, in church on Sunday morning, at school, and sometimes in the streets. The most common activities of girls with their friends are "talking"; especially about school matters like lessons or their teachers, about fashion, about their dowry, about the relation between the two sexes. Girls' activities with their friends include working or studying together, walking, singing, doing needlework, reading magazines or listening to the radio. The boys, when they meet their friends, usually talk about sports, school matters and girls. Other discussion topics of boys are where to go and what to do, radio and television programmes or politics.

There is a strong indication that we need "youth clubs" where the young people may go and enjoy several activities. For the time being the most popular recreational facilities for the young are coffee-shops, playgrounds (wherever they exist) and summer cafés. The girls usually complain that many of the existing recreational facilities are accessible only to boys. They also complain that they have particular difficulties meeting anywhere to do anything at all. Although there is a traditional prejudice which hinders the boys and girls from being together in the same

place, the young people would be in favour of joint activities. For instance, a youth club where both sexes could go would enable them, as they believe, to become better acquainted, to exchange views, to discuss and behave freely. The youth who oppose joint activities usually stress the pressure of public opinion against them. "It is something forbidden", they say. The majority of the young people prefer a youth club instead of a club open to both adults and young people. They support this because, as they say, adults and adolescents have different ideas, interests and problems and they do not understand one another. In this way they will feel free and have the minimum of interference.

The research made by Mr Taylor indicates that the young people consider the age of 23 to 27 for a man and 21 to 23 for a woman as a good age for marriage. The majority of the young people think that they themselves should choose their own marriage partners, although quite a high percentage believe that both young people and their parents should be involved. As to the question whether the young people consider that a dowry should continue to be given for girls, a higher proportion of girls - but also many boys - are not in favour because of the burden on poor families and the opportunities today for young couples to work and gradually meet their own needs. However, the tradition of the dowry for girls is, on the contrary, becoming even stronger nowadays, because the problem of housing is a major problem for young married couples. The prices for rent and plots of land for building are exorbitant for the young couples.

There are strong indications from the pieces of research mentioned above that our young people are ready and eager for greater involvement in community affairs. Their common point of view is that with guidance, responsibility and opportunities young people could show more interest and co-operation in community problems, express their opinions, serve on committees, organize activities and participate in the administration of their community.

In Cyprus we do not find any expression of the so-called world-wide "youth rebellion" in the form of either philosophical or political movements. We do not have any revolutionary activity of youth striving actively to change society.

The structure of our society is traditional and its setting is familistic. The authority of the elders, which at first glance cannot be seen, is paramount. The youth are the obedient servants of their parents. During the last twenty years there has been a strong tendency towards emancipation. Nevertheless, although many steps have been made in this direction, the family tradition

is so deep-rooted that it is still continuing to resist, and I am of the opinion that it will not easily disappear. Many prejudices create strict limitations, especially for young girls.

Beyond a doubt, the established mores of the older population have received a shock from the modern notions of to-day's society. A transformation is in the making in our society, but this transformation is going on slowly without demonstrations and loud outbursts. This is the reason why our society is ideal from this standpoint. We may say that our older people accept social innovations as long as they are slow and natural. Thus the older people of Cyprus do not yet have that increasing uncertainty which is usually one of the reasons of inter-generation conflict nowadays.

Because of this attitude of the older people against the violent transformations in the society, we do not find among the youth of Cyprus the problems of disillusionment, alienation and delinquency - problems which are manifested in destructive actions such as drug-taking, violence or mental illness.

There are many other social factors which exercise a minor or major influence upon the youth of Cyprus. Such factors are the Church, education, the general political situation and the mass media. Unfortunately, it is not possible for all these factors to be analysed nor for the extent of their influence on young people to be discussed within the framework of a short talk.

Karl Mannheim in the period of World War II wrote that youth must play an important role if social progress is to be achieved: "I believe that static societies which develop only gradually, and in which the rate of change is relatively slow, will rely mainly on the experience of the old."(8) On the other hand, a dynamic society would give youth a high status so that it would have the chance to use all the pure spontaneity of its strength, both spiritual and physical, for the benefit of society. "The dynamic societies which want to make a new start, whatever their social or political philosophy may be, will rely mainly on the co-operation of youth. They will organize their vital resources and will use them in breaking down the established direction of social development."(9)

In concluding, may I say that I feel slightly guilty! I genuinely believe that the topic I have dealt with could cover not just one book but many books, and anyone who would assume the responsibility for this task would need much time in order to complete it conscientiously - although, to be sure, topics related to a constantly changing society never reach completion.

Foot notes

1. Youth and Development in Africa, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, 1970 p.vii.
2. Cratylus 402A, Plato. Also in The Presocratic Philosophers, G.S. Kirk & J.E. Raven, Cambridge University Press. p.197.
3. See No.1.
4. The Theory of Education in Plato's Republic, R.L. Nettleship, Oxford University Press. Introduction p.4.
5. Ibid. p.5.
6. In Partnership with Youth, Unesco. p.10.
7. Statistics of Education in Cyprus, School Year 1970-1971, Statistics and Research Department, Ministry of Finance, Cyprus.
8. Diagnosis of our Time, Karl Mannheim. p.33.
9. Ibid.

APPENDIX

TABLE I Cyprus: Youth population by age-group and sex

Age group	Total	Male	Female
12-17	76,202	38,937	37,265
18-20	24,555	11,279	13,276
21-25	45,370	22,166	23,204
26-30	38,129	17,422	20,707
Total	184,256	89,804	94,452

TABLE II Cyprus: Youth population by way of using time

Way of using time	Total	Percentage
Pupils in secondary schools	42,245	26.4%
Students in foreign countries (approx.)	8,547	5.8%
Working youth	91,277	61.6%
Others (approx.)	9,227	6.2%
Total	151,296	100.0%

TABLE III Cyprus: Youth population and urban/rural distribution

Age	Towns			Rural areas			Total
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
10-14	23,042	11,844	11,198	44,060	22,415	21,645	67,102
15-19	18,365	9,506	8,859	29,293	13,940	15,353	47,658
20-24	19,088	9,346	9,742	27,994	13,293	14,701	47,082
25-29	16,781	8,240	8,541	21,458	9,556	11,902	38,239
Total	77,276	38,936	38,340	122,805	59,204	63,601	200,081