CYPRIOT SETTLEMENT IN LONDON BETWEEN THE WARS 1919-1939

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Preface (2011)

This research note makes available some data on the distribution and socio-economic characteristics of Cypriots in London between the First and Second World Wars.

The 1920s and 1930s were the period in which Cypriots first began to migrate to Britain to find employment. This initial small-scale movement was followed by a much more substantial migration of Cypriots to Britain during the early post-war decades – the 1950s and 1960s. The characteristics of the initial pre-war settlement helped to shape the post-war migration in a number of important ways.

The data presented here were collected during the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of the author's research into the migration and settlement of Cypriots in Britain up to that time generally. Data relating to the post-war period were presented in detail in the author's unpublished D.Phil. thesis 'Cypriot Migration and Settlement in Britain' (Oxford University 1971), and in summary form in several short published articles(see footnotes in main text). Data related to the pre-war period were not included in the thesis.

Some time later, however, the author published two articles focusing specifically on the migration during the pre-war period: one exploring the origins and early development of the migration generally, and the second focusing more narrowly on the mechanisms used by the government in London and Cyprus to control and regulate the migration during the inter-war period (see footnote 1 in main text). The present paper, which complements the other two was also drafted at that time (and referenced as 'forthcoming'), but was not finalised and published. What follows is the text of that initial draft, with some further editing but no updating or other new material.

The present research note therefore aims to supplement the two published articles by focusing more specifically on the characteristics of the nascent community of Cypriots in London that resulted from the pre-war migration. It does not aim to give a full picture of the life and experiences of the Cypriot settlers at this time: it mainly presents the data on the distribution and characteristics of the Cypriot population in London during the inter-war period. These are the data that were originally collected by the author, and no new research has been undertaken subsequently.

The reason for proceeding to write up these data after this long period of time is firstly that there appears to be increasing interest – particularly within the Cypriot community itself – in exploring the situation and experiences of Cypriots during these early years of settlement, as is shown by the establishment of several oral history projects. Secondly, however, to date no one else subsequently appears to have explored and recorded the basic demographic and other statistical or documentary information that can provide an overview of the situation of Cypriots in London at that time. Although these data may be limited, and their reliability at times uncertain, they are nonetheless of interest from a historical perspective, and complement the personal accounts generated through the oral history projects.

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Cypriot Migration Prior to WW2

The earliest recorded Cypriot immigrants to Britain arrived during and after the end of the First World War. Numbers appear to have been small until the end of the 1920s, when the emigration to Britain begins to be mentioned in the Colonial Reports. By the time of the 1931 census, over a thousand persons born in Cyprus were enumerated in Britain, some 800 of whom are likely to have been Cypriot, rather than of British ethnic origin but born overseas. The numbers increased more rapidly during the 1930s, the scale being such that the colonial government introduced increasingly strict regulations to control the issue of passports to intending emigrants, requiring them to possess 'affidavits of support' from persons already established in Britain (the intention being not so much to reduce numbers, but to minimise problems of destitution and repatriation). Official estimates of the rate of migration in the mid to late 1930s suggest a total of a thousand or more emigrants annually, and the overall size of Cypriot settlement in Britain was estimated to have reached by the end of the decade some 7-8,000 persons. Virtually all of these pre-war settlers were Greek-Cypriot by ethnic group, there being little in the way of evidence of more than the occasional Turkish Cypriot among the migrants in this initial stage of Cypriot settlement.[1]

Settlement in London

The 1931 and (in the absence of a 1941 census) the 1951 population censuses demonstrate how Cypriot settlement was from the beginning concentrated in London (see Table 1). Nearly four-fifths of those enumerated in 1931 as born in Cyprus were located in Greater London, and of those enumerated elsewhere it is likely that most were persons of British ethnic origin born in Cyprus to British families involved in the colonial administration and related enterprise. In 1951 the concentration was still at the same level, though by that time Cypriot immigrants had become established in several provincial towns and cities. Such biographical information as has been obtained for Cypriots who 'pioneered' settling in the provinces indicates that movement outside London did not begin until the end of the 1930s decade, and in the years during and immediately after the war. Statements in the Report of the Government of Cyprus' London Office for 1938, and in the Greek-Cypriot newspaper To Vima in 1940, likewise indicate that Cypriot settlement in Britain was essentially metropolitan in location. Prior to World War Two, therefore, Cypriot settlement in Britain essentially meant Cypriot settlement in London. And its overall size at the end of the 1930s, as already indicated, may be estimated as 7-8,000 persons.

Distribution of Settlement in London

The earliest Cypriot immigrants in London settled for the most part in the West End. Information from the censuses of 1921 and 1931 provides a picture of the distribution of Cypriot settlement in London. Of the 81 Cyprus-born males and 24 females in London in 1921, 46 males and 7 females were located in the boroughs of St Pancras, Paddington, Holborn and Westminster, with a further 11 males in the borough of Stepney.

[1] Oakley, R, "Cypriot Migration to Britain prior to World War II", *New Community*, XV, 4, July 1989, 509-525; also, "The Control of Cypriot Migration to Britain Between the Wars", *Immigrants & Minorities*, VI, 1, March 1987, 30-43. Both these articles and the present one draw substantially on the records of the London Office of the Government of Cyprus (accessible at the Public Record Office), and it should be assumed in the text that follows that data are drawn from this source if not otherwise referenced.

Table 1

CYPRUS-BORN POPULATION OF LONDON 1911-1951

	LONDON A.C.			GREATER LONDON			REST OF ENGLAND & WALES			ALL ENGLAND & WALES		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1911	50	..	..	..	..	..	136	..	..	186	104	82
1921	105	..	..	..	..	..	211	..	..	316	197	119
1931	734	676	58	804	715	89	255	165	90	1059	880	179
1951	6799	4199	2600	7983	4964	3019	2225	1530	695	10208	6494	3714

Source: Population Censuses

By 1931, overall numbers had increased, but the same concentration of Cypriot-born population was apparent (see Table 2). Of 676 males and 58 females enumerated in London, 470 males and 22 females were enumerated in four central boroughs (St Pancras, Holborn, Westminster and St Marylebone), ie. towards three-quarters of the total. Only 20 were enumerated in Stepney, indicating negligible growth of settlement in East London. However, settlement had also spread by this date to south of the river, with some 76 persons born in Cyprus enumerated in the borough of Lambeth. There was no significant settlement in West London, reflecting the fact that there was very little connection between the new Cypriot settlers and the established Greek community centred around the Orthodox Cathedral in Bayswater.

Table 2

CYPRUS-BORN POPULATION OF LONDON BY BOROUGH 1931

	Total	Male	Female
All London AC	734	676	58
St Pancras	253	241	12
Holborn	123	121	2
Westminster	86	83	3
Lambeth	76	72	4
St Marylebone	33	33	-
Kensington	32	17	15
Paddington	30	25	5
Stepney	20	18	2
All Other Boroughs	81	66	15

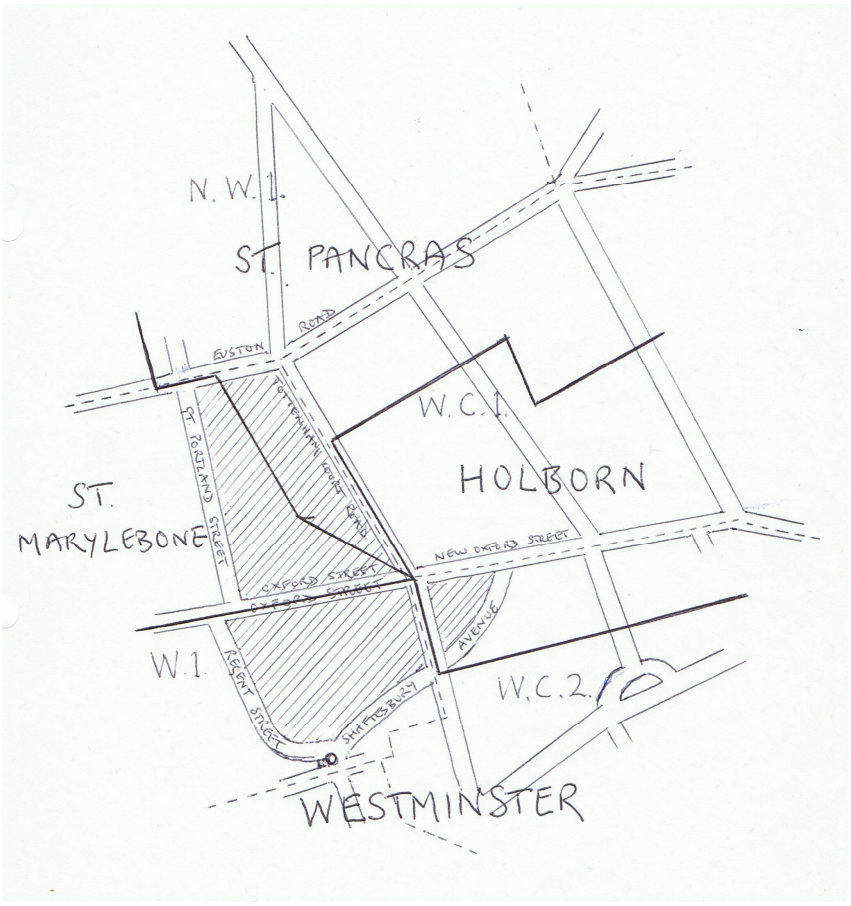
Source: *Census of Population 1931*

However, the concentration of settlement was much greater than the list of four main boroughs might suggest, for these four boroughs meet at a single point, the crossing of Oxford Street with Tottenham Court Road and Charing Cross Road. It was in the specific neighbourhood that surrounds this meeting point of the boroughs, the neighbourhood of Soho on the northern edge of London's West End, that the early Cypriot settlers mainly congregated (see Figure 1).

This localisation of Cypriot settlement in London's West End is also evidenced by two other sets of data relating to 1939. Firstly, Nearchou sampled the records of callers to the Government of Cyprus' London Office in that year, and classified them according to the postal district in which they resided. Forty-five per cent were resident in the W1 postal district, covering St Marylebone and Westminster, and 12% in WC2, covering the Holborn side of the area[2]. Secondly, data were compiled by the Education Officer of the London County Council (LCC) for the number of children attending schools in Soho and adjacent areas in 1939. Of the 93 whose schools were identified, 79 (85%) were attending schools in the Soho area, and 14 (15%) further north in the Camden Town area.[3] These data therefore further confirm the high concentration of Cypriot migrants in this particular neighbourhood.

Figure 1

LOCATION OF SOHO AREA IN CENTRAL LONDON



[2] Nearchou V, *The Assimilation of the Cypriot Community of London*, MA thesis University of Nottingham, 1960, p.72

[3] Public Record Office, CO67, 295/11

The Neighbourhood of Soho

Soho is probably the best-known of London's cosmopolitan quarters. Initially a respectable area built up during the Georgian period, parts of it and its vicinity became run down during Victorian times, with much poverty, unemployment, and sweated labour in crowded workshops. It drew in poor and unskilled workers, including many Irish, Italians and Eastern-European Jews. By the 1920s, however, Soho had raised its status to some extent, chiefly on account of its growing importance as an epicurean centre, accompanied by a vibrant street life. If poverty, overcrowding and unemployment were less acute, though, they were by no means eliminated, and with its high proportion of foreigners the area was in middle-class eyes still far from respectable. As the English novelist John Galsworthy wrote in *The Forsyte Saga*, published in 1922:

> "Of all quarters in the queer adventurous amalgam called London, Soho is perhaps least suited to the Forsyte spirit… Untidy, full of Greeks, Ishmaelites, cats, Italians, tomatoes, restaurants, organs, coloured stuffs, queer names, people looking out of upstairs windows, it dwells remote from the British body politic."[4]

However evocative this description may have been, it was somewhat misleading in respect of the Greeks, for until those of Cypriot origin began arriving about this time, there were relatively few of them.[5] Moreover, the first specific documentary reference to Cypriots that has been located comes in 1930, in the Charles Booth's *New Survey of Life and Labour in London*, in the course of a comment on the catering trade:

> "Foreigners employed in the catering trade appear to reside mainly in three centres, ie. in Soho, around Waterloo Station and the Elephant and Castle, and along the Fulham Road… At the present time, the operation of the Aliens Immigration Act has produced an appreciable number of low-class Cypriots who are technically British subjects. These persons are content to perform the lowest duties at the lowest wage, and tend to live in Soho."[6]

Location of Cypriot businesses

The importance of the Soho area as the centre of Cypriot settlement in London is also emphasised by the fact that almost all Cypriot businesses and associations which were in existence at the end the 1930s were located within that part of the West End. Nearchou, working principally from the Government of Cyprus Office records, provides a figure of 52 Cypriot businesses as being established in London in 1939, but does not specify the areas in which they were located[7]. I myself, working from Classified Directories, and using also advertisements in the Cypriot newspaper To Vima, have located 59 businesses which appear to be Cypriot as being in existence in 1939 or thereabouts. Of these all but five were located in that section of London's West End which, astride Oxford Street, is bounded by Great Portland Street and Tottenham Court Road above, and by Regent Street and Shaftesbury Avenue below.

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[4] Galsworthy J, *The Forsyte Saga*, Dover Publications, 2004 (orig. 1922), p.297

[5] Interestingly, in the late 17th century, Greek refugees from the Ottoman Turks were one of the first groups of immigrants to settle in the Soho area, and built a Greek Church there, but they did not remain long in the area, and after their departure the church was taken over by French Huguenots (though the memory of them survives in the name 'Greek Street').

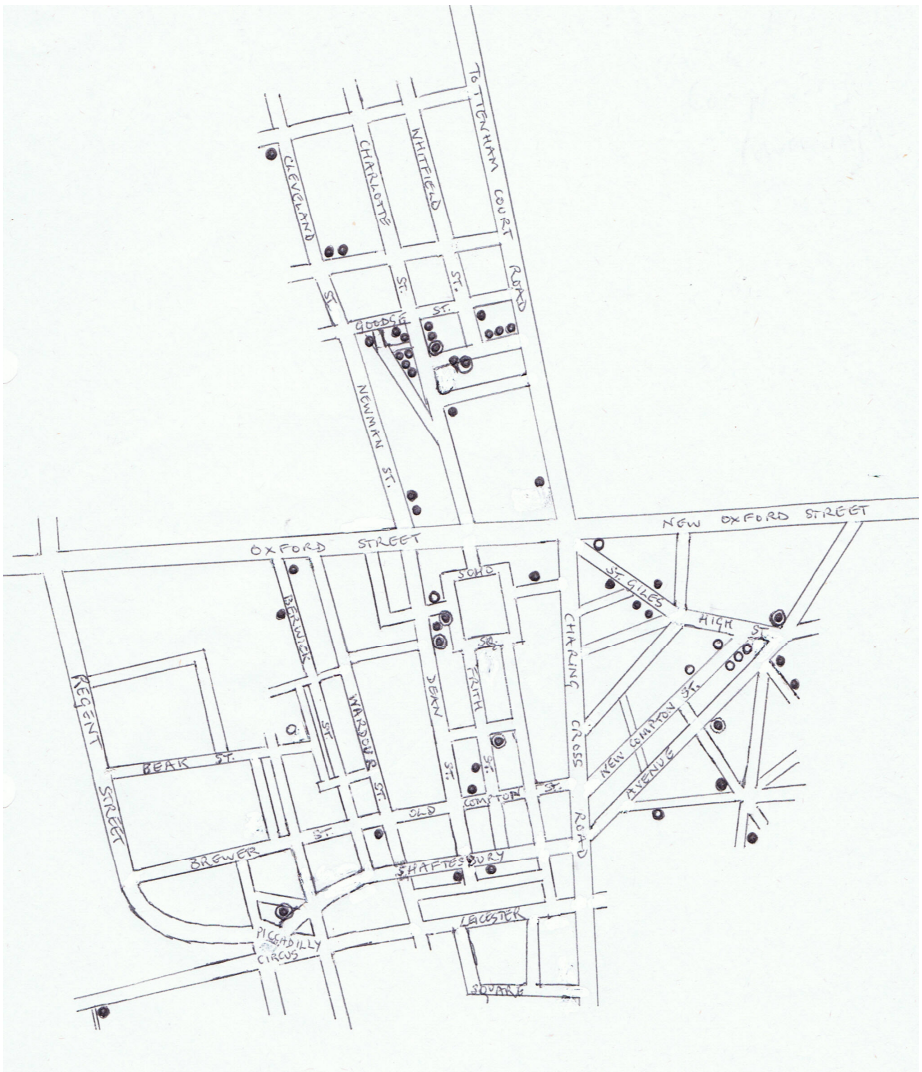
[6] Booth C, *New Survey of Life and Labour in London, Vol. VIII: London Industries III, Hotel and Catering Trades* (London 1930), p.222

[7] Nearchou V, *op. cit*.

The street plan for the Soho area in Figure 2 shows the distribution of Cypriot businesses and enterprises individually for the years 1935 and 1939.[8] While to some extent there is a scatter of these establishments throughout the area generally, there is also a tendency for them to be concentrated in groups of adjacent streets. The first two of these clusters, already in evidence in 1935, were on either side of Charing Cross Road, one in the heart of 'traditional' Soho and the other around St Giles High Street. The third cluster, evidently developing later on in the decade, lies in the 'extension' of Soho north of Oxford Street, where there developed a substantial collection of Cypriot businesses around the lower end of Charlotte Street close to its junction with Goodge Street. Although it is possible to distinguish these as distinct clusters on the street diagram, in practice they lie within a single 'neighbourhood', with its centre tending to shift northwards within the locality.

Figure 2

LOCATION OF CYPRIOT BUSINESSES IN SOHO, 1935 & 1939



- ○ 1935
- • 1939

[8] A small number in the latter year are not included on this map, as precise addresses could not be identified.

These data refer only to Cypriot-owned businesses, and not to places of work of Cypriots generally. However, most Cypriot immigrants in London at this time still found work in the hotels and restaurants which abound in this part of London, and most too resided in the same area. The locations of purely Cypriot businesses, however, are in themselves indicators too of the centre of Cypriot life in London, for it is in them that the immigrants would have shopped, obtain services, ate and drank, and took their leisure. Their existence in so concentrated a pattern is strong additional evidence for a highly localised pattern of settlement.

Of the total of 59 Cypriot businesses identified for 1939, only five lay right outside London's West End. Three of these, which had only recently been established, lay north of Soho and the Euston Road, in the Mornington Crescent and Camden Town area of the borough of St Pancras. They included a café-restaurant sited centrally to the area, and in this respect in particular they signify the beginnings of an important trend: the shift in the centre of gravity of Cypriot settlement out of Soho and into Camden Town[9].

In the absence of a census in 1941, this cannot be not documented directly by a population census. However, the shift northwards towards Camden Town is evident from other sources. Not only were there indications in the location of Cypriot businesses, but of Nearchou's sample of callers to the Government of Cyprus' London Office in 1939, some 17% were resident in the NW1 postal district.[10] This covers the areas of Mornington Crescent and Camden Town, immediately to the north of the Euston Road. If this sample was representative of all Cypriots in London, one may further estimate that by the end of the decade there were probably more than 1,000 Cypriots living in the NW1 postal district. Camden Town, therefore, had already begun to be adopted as a 'dormitory area' by the Cypriot immigrants, even if their work and recreation still centred on Soho to the south. Direct bus routes, and the Northern Underground Line provided quick and easy access between these two areas (see Figure 3). As noted above though, the first Cypriot businesses providing services to the community had already opened in Camden Town, thus providing a foretaste of the area's focal importance for Cypriot community life in the early post-war decades.

Demographic Composition

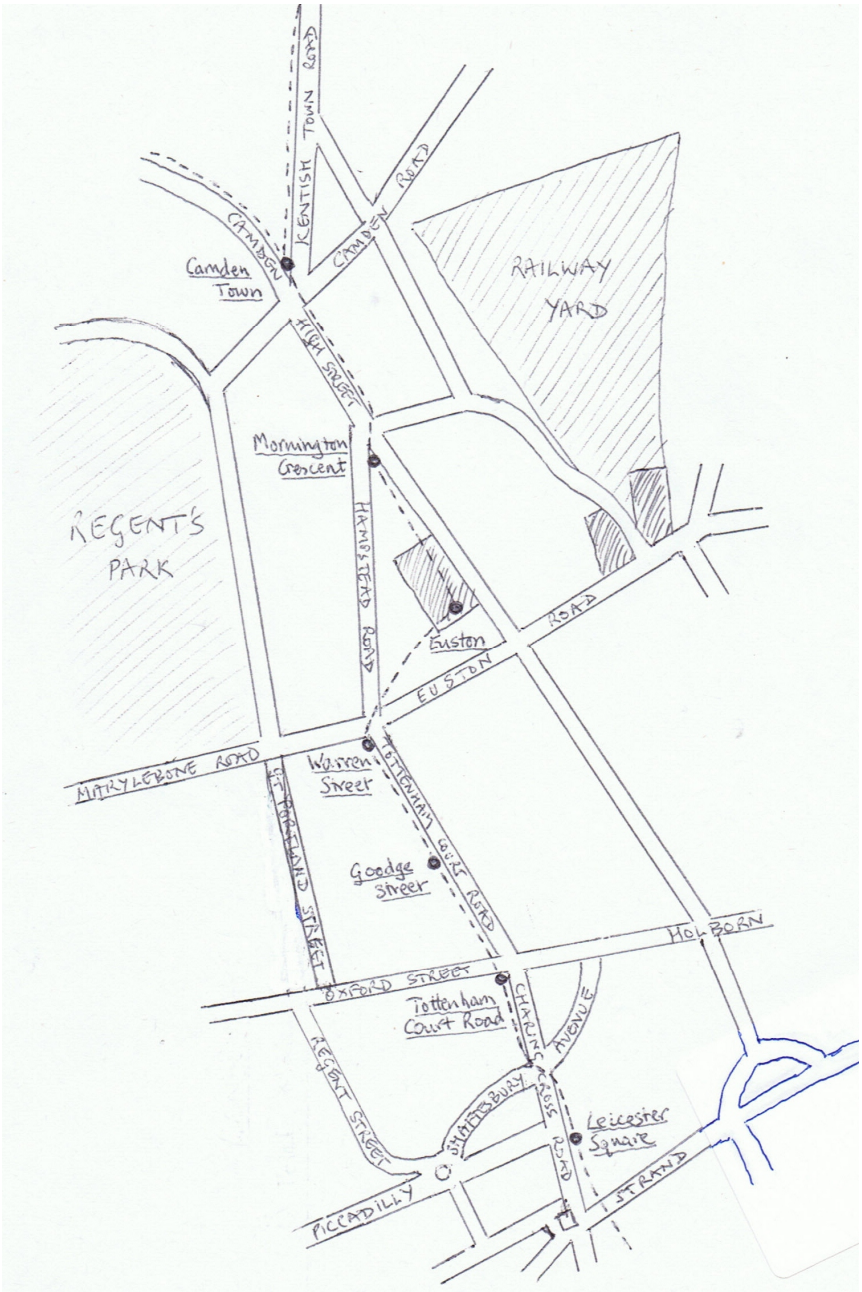
The 1930s saw also a change in the demographic composition of the settlement. To consider first the sex composition, we have seen that among the pioneer migrants, males outnumbered females very greatly (Tables 1 & 2 above). In 1931, according to the Census, male Cypriots in London outnumbered females by 10 to 1, and in the four boroughs converging on the Soho area, the ratio was over 20 to 1. By 1951, on the other hand, when the next Census took place, the imbalance was much reduced, the sex ratio being 1.64 to 1. While in part this was due to post-war developments, it reflected also changes in the pattern of migration which were occurring in the later 1930s. Of over 500 Cypriot immigrants to Britain in 1938 recorded in the Cyprus Office Report for that year, almost half were females and of these only about 1 in 10 were children. If these figures were typical of the sex composition of migrants in all years in the later 1930s, then by the end of the decade the sex ratio among the immigrants would have already fallen to around 2 to 1.

[9] Oakley R, *Changing Patterns of Distribution of Cypriot Settlement*, Research Papers in Ethnic Relations No.5, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick 1987

[10] Nearchou, op cit, p.72

Figure 3

TRANSPORT ROUTE FROM SOHO TO CAMDEN TOWN



This change is reflected also in data collected from the Register of Electors in the St Giles Ward for 1938. Of 36 dwellings with identifiably Cypriot residents, although 14 had male residents only (ranging from 1 to 7 persons), 22 included a husband and wife. Of these 10 had a husbands and wives only (2 pairs in two of the instances), while the other 12 had a variety of additional persons. In 9 cases these were men only (ranging from 1 to 8), while in the other 3 there were also females (ranging from 1 to 3 persons). These data clearly indicate an increasing presence of women joining the settlement, particularly as wives, though in some cases also as younger women as yet

unmarried. The data also indicate that some dwellings functioned as lodging-houses for single Cypriot men. In a number of cases Cypriot businesses were also present at the same address, so presumably the owner together with co-workers were also resident there. What cannot be determined is the extent to which co-residents were also members of the same family, although the same surname was present among co-residents in at least 6 instances, suggesting that this is likely to have been a common circumstance in multi-person households.

As regards the age composition there is no direct statistical evidence, though there can be no doubt that young adults predominated. This is clear from examination of registers of Cypriots arriving at British ports in the mid-30s: one set of registers in 1936 showed that of 81 adults arriving at Newhaven, two-thirds were between 17 and 26 years, while only 8 were 37 or over.[11] According to the Government of Cyprus Office annual reports, deaths recorded of Cypriots in 1937 and 1938 were only 5 and 8 respectively, indicating a virtual absence of elderly persons. However, by the end of the decade there were also a number of children. Immigrants in 1938 included more than 50 children (about 10% of the total). In addition children born within the settlement numbered 45 in 1937, and 75 in 1938. In 1939, the LCC Education Officer reported that there were approximately 150 Cypriot children in schools in the Soho area, the great majority of them in primary schools.[12] By the end of the decade, therefore, there would have already been many households of immigrant parents and children.

The presence of children is not of course recorded in the Register of Electors, nor of course is whether men living on their own (or in groups) were already married. Many of these men without families in Britain would undoubtedly have been married, having at least temporarily left their wives and children behind in Cyprus. The problems that could, and often did, arise in these circumstances were one of the main concerns of the Government of Cyprus and its London Office regarding the migration. For example, the Government Office in London recorded dealing in 1938 with 22 cases where the husband failed to support his dependents back home, the wife having declared that they were destitute.[13]

Employment

The earliest immigrants found work chiefly in hotels and restaurants in the West End, working mainly in the kitchens, and in a few cases (where their English was sufficient) as waiters. This was one of the main reasons why English language classes were popular among the migrants (see below), as they helped Cypriots to progress out of the kitchens into becoming waiters, and then potentially becoming managers or owners of their own restaurants. Although the wages of waiters and kitchen-hands were nominally poor (informants recall figures of around 5 to 6/- a week), they received also tips and food, and in a few cases lodging as well. The work was hard though, and the hours long. Most of the work available was in hotels, though Cypriots worked also in restaurants, often under Italians as well as English owners and managers. The main cause of hardship was seasonal unemployment. To avoid this, and especially in summer, Cypriots would take temporary jobs outside London and generally in hotels in seaside towns on the south coast or other seaside resorts elsewhere in the country. A few found more permanent jobs there and took them, often eventually setting up businesses of their own, although the vast majority remained settled in London.

[11] Oakley 1989, "Cypriot Migration", *op cit,* p.518
[12] Public Record Office, CO67, 295/11
[13] See Oakley 1987, "The Control of Cypriot Migration", *op cit*, for further information on the activities of the Cyprus Government Office on addressing such situations.

For the most part Cypriot men continued during the 1930s to follow the pioneer migrants in finding work in the catering trade. Indeed, in 1951 still as many as half of London Cypriots were employed in catering. The Cyprus Office Report for 1938 states that, of the 'large majority' of Cypriots who were hotel and restaurant employees, practically all worked in the West End, "at such places as the Savoy, Berkeley, Grosvenor House, Piccadilly, Chez Quaglino, Claridges, Park Lane, Monico, etc. Indeed it is difficult", it goes on, "to find a hotel or restaurant in the West End where no Cypriots are employed as waiters, commis-waiters, or kitchen-hands." The large hotels and restaurants evidently employed Cypriots in quite substantial numbers: for example, about 50 were reported to have been given jobs at J. Lyons & Co. in that year.

The wages of Cypriots in the catering trade pre-war were reported as varying between £2/5/- and £3/10/- per week, with food provided, and in season earnings might rise considerably higher with the addition of tips. Seasonal unemployment, however, was common in the winter months. New migrants without jobs secured in advance were liable to be unable to obtain work, and it was partly to prevent this that the Cyprus Government introduced further controls on migration. Language was another factor: the Cyprus Office report states that "immigrants unable to speak English found it extremely difficult to obtain employment: if work was found, they were the first to be dismissed when staffs were reduced." At the end of 1938, the report records that some 400 Cypriot men and women were out of work, the great majority of them hotel and restaurant workers.

Outside catering, Cypriots worked mainly in particular craft trades, chiefly hairdressing, tailoring and dressmaking. Clerical work and manual work in electrical, engineering and other mechanised trades apparently offered few if any prospects to immigrants on account of the high level of unemployment in them. Within the clothing industry, unemployment tended to be more seasonal. Most Cypriot women found employment in dressmaking, working for English and often Jewish employers, there still being a well-established Jewish community in Soho at this time. Problems were likely to arise over their ignorance of the English language, since supervisors had difficulty in explaining about patterns and styles. Men also worked as tailors, and sometimes as supervisors of women machinists and finishers in the clothing workshops. Commenting on the increase in the number of women immigrants, the Liaison Officer at the Cyprus office wrote that "the arrival of decent Cypriot girls had steadying influence on the younger unmarried men, in many cases saving them from undesirable liaisons with lower-class Jewish and other non-Cypriot women."[14]

<u>The first Greek & Cypriot Cafes</u>

The small number of Cypriots who arrived in the early years after WW1 kept closely in touch with one another. Some found work together, others shared lodgings, but for the most part they met at the Greek cafes in Soho.

According to John Stais (the owner from 1938 onwards of the well-known White Tower Restaurant in Percy Street), who himself arrived in 1919, the café where the Cypriots initially congregated was located just off St Giles High Street in New Compton Street, and was run by Captain Stathis Catopodis, a Greek merchant-ship captain from Ithaca, together with his English wife.[15] Although

[14] Another of the concerns of the Government of Cyprus London Office (and at times also of the police and the local press) regarding the inter-war settlement of Cypriots in London was the involvement of young Cypriot men in criminality, and also in prostitution as well as the prevalence of gambling in the Cypriot cafes. There is plenty of documentation of these concerns in the files of the Government Office: see also the report of Mr Hart-Davis cited below.

[15] The information from John Stais is drawn from a personal interview on 7 October 1965, and letters to the author of 22 October 1965 and 19 January 1966. According to Stais, Catopodis' café was established around 1923; it is recorded in the street directories from 1927 onwards.

Catopodis was not himself a Cypriot, and Greeks in Soho from other territories also used the café, the reason it was popular with Cypriots was that the manager of the café was a Greek-Cypriot from Morphou. In these early years, no Cypriots had sufficient financial resources to be able to establish such a business on their own.

The first Cypriot-owned café, according to Stais, was established later in the 1920s, just a short distance away on Shaftesbury Avenue close to St Giles Passage. Its owner, Georgios Papaloizou, originated from Lefkara and had arrived in London in 1915.[16] Previously in the early 1920s he had been running a café/boarding-house for sailors just off Cable Street in the East End, which would no doubt have enabled him to acquire both the experience and financial resources to now open a cafe more centrally in the West End. However, the building on Shaftesbury Avenue in which his cafe was initially located was shortly to be demolished to make way for the building of the Saville Theatre, which opened in 1931. He subsequently re-established his café in Carlisle Street off Soho Square.[17] Papaloizou originated from Lefkara, and Stais recalls that all the Cypriots from Lefkara and its neighbouring villages moved to his café as soon as he had opened it, leaving those from Morphou and other areas at that of Catopodis. This was the beginning of a process of village differentiation in cafes and their clienteles which would multiply as more cafes opened subsequently as the 1930s progressed.

By 1930, the Street Directories were listing 5 Greek-owned cafes or restaurants in Soho, indicating their importance for the nascent settlement, both for the Cypriots now resident there and as a field of business and employment. Although this number was small compared to those run by Italians and other groups, the development was significant as a pointer for the decades ahead.

The Development & Types of Cypriot Businesses in the 1930s

During the 1930s, in both catering and clothing trades, and also in hairdressing and other service trades, Cypriot immigrants were increasingly setting up businesses independently. The beginning of this process was slow, for (as has been noted above) the Street and Commercial Directories of the period indicate that between 1930 and 1935 the number of Cypriot establishments increased only from 8 to 11.

For 1939, on the other hand, some 59 Cypriot businesses have been identified, 54 of them in the Soho region as noted earlier (see Table 3). This figure includes all establishments with Cypriot names, and others which can be identified as Cypriot with complete or near certainty. Since, as this implies, some may have chosen not to identify their businesses with a Cypriot name, it is likely that this total may be an underestimate. However, three dressmaking establishments listed in the Directories and named by initials only have been included, as this was a normal naming practice for Cypriot businesses in the dressmaking trade.

[16] Papaloizou came to London via Athens, at the time of the 'November Troubles' in 1915. Stais came via Salonika, where he was invalided out of the British Forces in 1919. See Oakley 1989 *op cit*, pp.515-6.

[17] Papaloizou's café on Well Street, E1, is recorded in the Street Directory for 1926. The café in Carlisle Street is listed from 1930 onwards.

Table 3

CYPRIOT ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE SOHO AREA: 1930-1939

	1930	1935	1939
Cafés/Restaurants	5	5	20
Tailors	2	3	9
Hairdressers		2	6
Shoe repairers	1	1	3
Grocers			3
Dressmakers			3
Other			10
TOTAL	8	11	54

Other = Valeting service, baker, builder, electrician, musician, newspaper publisher, doctor, dentist, lawyer, photographer

Source: Street Directories, advertisements in To Vima (weekly newspaper), and other sources.

By far the most numerous of the businesses set up at this time were café/restaurants. The retention of Cypriot names for most of them reflects the fact that in most cases their clientele was largely, if not entirely, composed of fellow-Cypriots, usually the relatives and fellow-villagers of the 'owner'. On the one hand, these Cypriot cafes met a substantial demand from within the settlement. Twenty cafes/restaurants for what was still a relatively small settlement may seem over-abundant, but it must be appreciated that for most Cypriots they were the nearest thing to 'home', and many Cypriot men would have passed most of their leisure hours within them. On the other hand, this nucleus of café/restaurants would not have arisen but for the initial employment of Cypriots in the big West End hotels. Cypriots arrived in Britain with neither skills, money nor indeed any particular motivation to set up cafes, and it was largely the opportunities they encountered in the catering trade that enabled them to acquire these. At first, the number who had earned and saved sufficient to set up a business independently was small, and this small supply met an internal demand. With the outbreak of war, however, as is described later, the opportunity came for Cypriots to replace the Italians' dominant position in the catering trade, and to establish businesses on a larger scale to meet the demand for services from society more generally. First of all, then the immigrants seem to have met their own needs in this direction; then they expanded their operations by offering their services to those outside.[18]

In other trades Cypriot businesses were fewer, with tailoring, hairdressing and shoe repairing being the more numerous. The demand for these services within the settlement itself was limited, and those practising such trades had to recruit custom more widely to make a livelihood. The necessary skills were of course possessed by those who had practised these crafts in Cyprus. But to apply them in Britain in self-employment required financial investment in both premises and equipment, so that employment first in catering was still liable to be a necessary preliminary. Among the other businesses in existence in 1939 were three groceries and a bakery. The remainder comprised one each of a valeting service, a builder, an electrician, a photographer, a newspaper publisher and a musician, and there were also a Cypriot doctor, a Cypriot dentist and a Cypriot lawyer practising in the Soho area.

[18] Oakley R, *Cypriot Migration and Settlement in Britain*, D.Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford 1971, Ch.12

The existence of this set of businesses contributed significantly to the form and character of the settlement at that time, and of its 'ethnic economy'. The wide range of trades into which the immigrants entered, setting up businesses on their own, ensured that from quite early on, most needs of Cypriots could be met within the settlement without moving outside it. Both consumption and recreation could be largely provided for by the 'internal' ethnic economy . On the other hand, some of these trades, as we have seen, were also applicable externally. The later expansion of Cypriot activity in these spheres was in post-war times to give the Cypriot settlement a high degree of economic self-sufficiency. While this is another story, the economic developments which took place in the pre-war decade must be seen as a preliminary to that expansion, a phase in which pioneer migrants consolidated their initial achievements, and by their actions began to fashion an organised ethnic community.[19]

The Beginnings of an Organised Community

This emergence of an organised ethnic community is apparent from a number of facets. At the informal level, of course, village and kinship ties were carried over from Cyprus,[20] and in fields such as work, housing and recreation these tended to be the context for social activity. This tendency was fostered by the Cyprus Government's emigration controls, which by requiring guarantors already established in Britain, largely restricted recruits to the settlement to those who already had such connections.[21] Cafés were the locations where those from the same villages gathered in their leisure time, and thus gave expression to the continuing importance of shared village identity and village-based social networks. At first these village associations were informal in nature, but later they often became formalised in the shape of 'village clubs'.

The earliest formal activity to involve the Cypriots in Soho was the provision of English language classes at the Pulteney Educational Institute in Soho, organised on the initiative of the Principal, Mr W A L Lenegre from 1927 onwards. These brought Cypriots together and met an important need, though they were organised externally under the auspices of the local education authority. The activities of the Government of Cyprus London Office, which in 1936 appointed a Liaison Officer for Cypriots in London were likewise an external intervention. The appointee was Mr S C Terezopoulos, a Cypriot lawyer who had already been carrying out welfare and advisory work on an informal basis among Cypriots previously, and who now undertook a variety of welfare and other monitoring and support activities in a formal capacity.

So far as the development of formal organisations internally within the settlement is concerned, one of the first to be established was the 'Cypriot Brotherhood' in 1934, a Greek-Cypriot nationalist association which was supported by the Greek Archbishopric in London, and engaged in a variety of social, educational and welfare activities. This was followed in 1939 by the establishment of the short-lived 'Cyprus Association', which was more assimilation-oriented and was backed by the Colonial Government and the British Council. However, the Cypriot Communist Party had also been active from as early as 1931 (the year of an unsuccessful uprising against British rule in favour of Union with Greece). The end of the decade also saw the production of the first Greek-Cypriot weekly newspapers, both representing the views of or close to the Communist Party, of which 'To Vima', founded in 1939 and first published on 1 January 1940, proved to be the one that endured. These different groupings and initiatives reflected the political divisions and interests in Cyprus at

[19] Oakley R, "The Cypriots in Britain", *Race Today*, April 1970, pp. 99-102; *Cypriot Migration and Settlement*, 1971, *op cit*.

[20] Oakley R, "Family, Kinship and Patronage: The Cypriot Migration to Britain", in V. Saifullah Khan (ed), *Minority Families in Britain: Support and Stress*, London: Macmillan 1979, pp. 12-34

[21] Oakley 1987, "The Control of Cypriot Migration"*, op cit.*

the time, and political affiliations and debate among Cypriots in London were at this stage almost entirely oriented towards the political and colonial situation in Cyprus rather than towards internal politics and circumstances within Britain. However, the newspaper 'To Vima' was to some extent able to cut across these divisions, as it was the only community-wide medium that articulated the concerns and experiences of the London Cypriots generally, and providing information about events as well as advertisements from Cypriot businesses.

Religion played a less important role in the formal organisation of the community, and it was not until 1948 that the Cypriots established their own Greek Orthodox Church in London, in Pratt Street in Camden Town. Prior to that time their only option was to attend the relatively distant Greek Cathedral in Bayswater in West London. This was the church of the well-established community of Greeks from the mainland and islands of independent Greece, who were relatively wealthy and predominantly engaged in international trade and business, and who constituted an entirely different social world with which the Cypriot Greeks (who spoke a different dialect) had little in common or by way of social connection. Relatively few participated in the Orthodox Cathedral regularly, apart from using it to celebrate key festivals or for the rites of marriage, baptism or death.

In these various ways, both informal and formal, and involving both external interventions and support and internal initiatives, a more organised community began to develop among the Cypriots settled in London during the years prior to World War Two. Significantly, however, this idea was not usually captured in the Greek language by the word *koinotis*, which is the direct equivalent of the word 'community' in English. Rather it was captured by the frequent use of the word *paroikia,* which also carries the idea of the community being a 'colony', a group who have settled in a land away from home. Cypriots in London may indeed have begun to build an organised community, but their identity at this stage remained firmly bound up with their homeland in Cyprus.

The Impact of the Second World War

The outbreak of the Second World War had a major impact on the Cypriot settlement in London. For a start, immigration into Britain effectively ceased, not to be continued until after the war had ended. However, virtually all of the Cypriots who had settled in Britain stayed put, and only a very small number of Cypriots left Britain to return to Cyprus. According to Nearchou, 109 persons did so, most of them being women and children[22]. The Greek-Cypriot newspaper To Vima reported that about 45 Cypriots returned to Cyprus during the first two months of 1940.

Cypriots in Britain were liable to conscription under the National Service Act. By the end of 1940, 2,500 had joined HM Forces, and a further 500 were registered but not yet called up.[23] This military service, and also the LCC evacuation scheme, had the effect of splitting up the community for a period of time, though by no means all of the Cypriots were affected in this way. For varying reasons, a number moved out of London to the provinces during the war period, and this led to the foundation of the first Cypriot communities outside London after the war. Whether or not they remained in London, however, it is clear that those who were not on military service stayed for the most part in the trades they had occupied previously.

The entry of Italy into the War in opposition to the Allies was an event of particular significance. Italians had, prior to this time, held a dominant position in the catering trade in Britain: on the staffs of large hotels and restaurants – and in both cases especially in London. The effect of Italy's entry into the War was to transform Italians into 'enemy aliens'. Rapidly, most Italians disappeared from

[22] Nearchou, *op cit*, p.16

[23] Ibid, p.17

their position in the trade, and in many instances Cypriots were in a position to replace them. This they did readily, for up to this point the presence of Italians had allowed Cypriots few opportunities except to work in the subordinate and low-paid roles as kitchen-staff and waiters, or as managers of small café/restaurants serving chiefly their own ethnic community. The Italians' departure opened the door to a rapid expansion not only in the access of Cypriots to higher status and better-paid positions in the big hotels and restaurants, but also in the number of Cypriot-run cafes and restaurants oriented towards the wider society, as against just towards the Cypriot community itself. According to the Government Office of Cyprus annual report for 1945, the number of Cypriot cafes and restaurants rose to around 200 by the end of the war. This breakthrough was an important factor in allowing the ethnic economy to continue expanding after the war, thus being able to accommodate increasing numbers of new immigrants. Its extent was also due in part to the favourable employment conditions during the war years, and the higher levels of earnings that Cypriots now had access to. Improved knowledge of English and of the English way of life (often obtained from experience during the periods of military service) also contributed to their success, and increased social integration during the wartime period, as did the positive status which in the eyes of British people they – and Greeks generally – had acquired as fellows and allies in the fight against the Axis Powers.

The War, therefore, was a key turning-point in the fortunes of the Cypriot community in London. This was a consequence of a number of factors, but particularly the entry of Italy into the War on the side of Germany and the opportunities it created for Cypriots in the catering trade. As a result, the initial achievements of the early migrants in the 1920s and 1930s in establishing a social and economic base for an ethnic community was followed by the further development and consolidation of this economic base during the wartime period, thus providing the foundation for the substantial growth of settlement and building of a strong ethnic community within London and beyond during the early post-war decades.[24]

A Note on Sources

The principal sources that were used in preparing this research note, and which could no doubt be used for further and more detailed investigation, have been the following:

1. *The decennial population censuses of England and Wales for 1921 and 1931 (there was no census in 1941, due to the war), which provide demographic data in statistical form for persons born in Cyprus.*
2. *Street Directories and Registers of Electors for central London during the inter-war period, in which Cypriot residents or businesses can be identified with some degree of confidence, usually from their names.*
3. *The annual Colonial Reports of the Government of Cyprus, and the annual Reports and other documents of the Government of Cyprus London Office, accessible at the Public Record Office (PRO, CO67).*
4. *The "Report on Cypriotes (sic) in London", prepared for the Colonial Office in 1935 by C.W Hart-Davis (Public Record Office, CO67/261/9 XC/A/51337)*
5. *Information contained in the London-based Cypriot weekly newspaper 'To Vima', which began publication on 1 January 1940 (copies accessible at the National Newspaper Library in Colindale).*

[24] For the early post-war decades, see Oakley 1971, *Cypriot Migration and Settlement*, *op cit*; Nearchou V, *op cit*; and the summary article based on the latter: George V & Millerson G, "The Cypriot Community in London", *Race*, VIII, 3, January 1967

6. *The MA Thesis prepared in 1960 by V. Nearchou at the University of Nottingham on the Cypriot Community in London which includes some pre-war data, including from the above sources.*

There remains considerable scope for these and other potential data sources to be explored more fully, so that a more detailed and definitive history of the early years of Cypriot settlement in London can be written.