INTRODUCTION

Recent studies of the field of immigration and minority groups in Britain have for the most part focused on 'coloured' immigrants and their situation, and the circumstances of 'white' minorities have been relatively neglected. Popular opinion, moreover, tends to conceive of all recent immigration as having been 'coloured' immigration, to the extent that the term 'immigrant' in Britain has come to imply 'coloured immigrant'.

While public attitudes and perceptions may explain this preoccupation with the 'racial' element in the situation, it is the task of social science to place this element in perspective. In the first place, it is a matter of fact that 'coloured' persons comprise only a modest proportion of the total immigrant population of Britain: just below 30 per cent according to an estimate based on the 1966 Census.[1] Secondly, their 'colour' is but one among a number of differentiating features of these groups, others being their ethnic identity and various additional features related to the different circumstances of their migration and settlement in Britain. It is for social science to disentangle these elements and to assess their relative importance as factors determining the situation of minority groups in society.

To achieve this, comparison is required, and in order to counter-balance the emphasis on ‘coloured’ minorities, studies of 'white' minorities in Britain are necessary. Some studies have already been carried out, among the Jewish[2], Polish[3] and Irish[4] minorities, but to date no full-scale study has been made of the largest non-coloured group of immigrants from the Commonwealth during the post-war period: the Cypriots.[5]

The present work aims to fill that gap to a certain extent, by examining Cypriot migration and settlement in Britain during the period from the end of the Second World War in 1945 up to the year 1966. But besides this intention to contribute to knowledge of Britain's ethnic minorities generally, there is a further aim of analysing the character and causes of a particular migration in greater detail than has hitherto been done for any recent migratory movement to Britain.[6] This has been possible in the case of Cypriot migration on account of the statistical record of passenger movement in and out of Cyprus which covers much of the post-war period. The study hopes also to illustrate the extent to which existing, mainly official, sources of information can be utilised - without being supplemented by an independent survey - in order to provide a comprehensive account of a modern migration and settlement overseas.

Who are the Cypriots, and how do they come to be potential migrants to Britain in the middle of the twentieth century? The island of Cyprus has a complex history which, it could be said, begins with settlement by Greeks in the second millennium B.C.[7] In less distant times, for some three centuries prior to 1878, the island formed part of the Ottoman Empire, during which time it became settled also by Turks. In 1878 the island came under British Protection, and following Annexation at the outbreak of War in 1914, it eventually in 1925 became a British Crown Colony. From the end of the 19th century, however, Cyprus was in effect part of the British Imperial system, and its place in that not unchanging design determined the pattern of its modern development. Originally, its role was intended to be a strategic one, but Britain's subsequent access to Egyptian territory rendered Cyprus a virtually useless possession within the Empire for almost 70 years, during which the island's sole function was as a rest-home for Middle-Eastern servicemen on leave. Up to the time of Second World War, therefore, 19th-century conditions of social, economic and political backwardness were more or less perpetuated on the island.

World War Two, and certain political developments in the Middle East which followed it, brought a change in fortunes for the islanders. With the subsequent Palestinian War and Britain's departure from Egypt, Cyprus once again became of major strategic importance to Britain. A vast programme of construction of military installations was initiated, which greatly increased the islanders' income, both directly through the provision of employment, and indirectly through the expenditure of British personnel stationed on the island. In conjunction

with the construction of military bases, a certain degree of social and economic development was introduced, mainly in the fields of health and welfare, co-operative marketing, and the provision of the basic infrastructure for a modern economy - transport, communications, power, etc.[8]

In spite of these various activities, methods of production and the social organisation of life on the island remained relatively unchanged: Cyprus continued as a typically 'peasant' economy and society. The British Administration did not introduce any proper development plan for the modernisation of the economy, for restructuring it with a view to self-sufficiency and economic growth. Such modernisation as was undertaken seems to have been aimed at providing only those conditions and services which were necessary for the efficient functioning of the island as a military outpost for Britain. Thus, when the construction work was mostly completed, and (with Independence in 1960) the British were in large part due to depart, Cyprus faced something of an economic crisis as the long period of somewhat artificial prosperity ended. The economic problems thus revealed were in due course inherited by the new Republican Government, though this has been in no position to work any miracles. During the post-war period, therefore, Cypriots have experienced a substantial improvement in their standard of living, but on the whole they have not found security either in jobs or in income, nor (in the absence of industrial towns and cities in Cyprus) have they been able to put behind them a predominantly peasant way of life. These circumstances - a direct outcome of British Colonial policy as regards Cyprus - have been especially germane to the extensive emigration of Cypriots during the 1950s and 1960s. This connection between Colonial policy and emigration from such territories indicates the need to perceive all such migrations of Commonwealth peoples to Britain in the context of the development (and decline) of the modern Imperial system.

Cypriots, as is well known, are not an undifferentiated people: ethnically they comprise both Greeks and Turks. Greek settlement on the island, as indicated earlier, dates from the dawn of the island's history, whereas the Turkish element arrived during the period of Ottoman rule. When Britain took over sovereignty, the Turkish population chose to stay on the island, preferring British protection to conditions on the Turkish mainland. The Greeks on the other hand have never been reconciled to alien rule, sharing - at least in theory - with their fellow-Hellenes the 'Great Idea' of one day creating a free and unified 'Greater Greece'. To this end they fought to liberate themselves of the British during the 1950s, and even if Enosis (Union) has not been the result, the inhabitants of Cyprus now comprise an independent State.

The issue of Independence, however, brought Greek and Turk once again into conflict with one another. Greeks constitute some four-fifths of the island's population and the Turks the remaining one-fifth, and this small Turkish minority has appeared to Greeks as the obstacle to so many of their designs. The escalation of tension between the two groups led to open fighting at the end of 1963, since when Turks have largely withdrawn into a small number of 'enclaves': a precarious 'peace' between the two groups being maintained subsequently only by a permanent United Nations presence on the island. Through most of the period of Independence, moreover, each group has administered its affairs independently of the other, so that Cyprus has become a truly divided society.[9]

Yet in spite of these political and administrative divisions, in several basic respects the culture of the two groups - for example, family and community life, and mode of livelihood - is closely similar. The difference between them is rooted principally in their different languages and religions, and in the long and well-remembered history of bitter antagonism between Greek and Turkish peoples generally. It is true that during much of the period of British rule the two groups lived side by side in relative harmony. Socially, however, they remained separated, and this segregation together with their respective religions and autonomous school systems[10] were the vehicles of the maintenance of their distinct ethnic identities. Within Britain, as in Cyprus, the two groups are almost entirely segregated, although outside the competitive context of their home island there is little active opposition between them. Although this study focuses on

Cypriots in Britain principally as a unitary group, this ethnic differentiation among them must always be borne in mind: wherever possible its relevance to the migration and settlement has been noted, as will be seen in the following Chapters.

The number of Cypriots in Britain at the end of 1966 is estimated to have been just over 100,000 (one for every six in Cyprus itself). Not all of these, however, have travelled to Britain during the post-war period (to which this study is limited), for already before the 1939-45 war a small community of Cypriots had been established in London. The migration and settlement of these pre-war travellers is the subject of a separate (as yet uncompleted) study by the author, and is not referred to in detail in this work. The vast majority of Cypriot migrants have reached Britain subsequent to the war, and it is solely this post-war movement that is analysed here. Within Britain, at all times the immigrants have been highly concentrated in London, where they have formed an ethnic community that is close-knit, economically successful and remarkably self-sufficient.

This concentration of settlement and self-sufficiency are among the factors which have rendered the Cypriots - in spite of their numbers - a remarkably unnoticed minority in Britain. Preferring the company of fellow-Cypriots, and not needing to go beyond their community to obtain jobs and commercial services, they have made relatively little contact with outsiders. In addition to this social segregation there is their lack of physical distinctness from the native population of Britain: neither in this, nor in dress or other aspects of personal appearance are they visible as members of a 'stranger' group. Moreover, in not being perceived as 'coloured', they have escaped the unequal treatment that has been extensively accorded to immigrants to Britain from many other parts of the Commonwealth.[11] It seems probable, therefore, that the second generation of Cypriots, if they choose, will find it relatively easy to move freely within British society. How far they will do so will mainly depend on their relationship with parents and with the Cypriot community generally, for from this direction there are strong pressures on children to remain loyal to the traditional ideals.

This study is based extensively on statistical data, and as already pointed out, seeks to demonstrate how far published information may be utilised to provide an account of a modern migration to Britain. The official statistical sources, however, by no means answer all the questions that might be put: at some points they have been supplemented by evidence from alternative sources, while at others the record leaves us regrettably ignorant. While this lack of control over the information available is an obvious disadvantage of relying on existing sources, against it must be set the substantial difficulties and costs of conducting a first-hand survey investigation into a modern migration, which would involve interviewing migrants across both space and time. The resources for such a study were not at the author's disposal.

A further difficulty of relying on the 'secondary analysis' of mainly statistical data is that of their interpretation - a problem that is more acute when the data relate to a culture which is not the investigator's own. To be able to interpret the data satisfactorily, a general background knowledge of Greek and Turkish Cypriot culture[12] was necessary, together with a more specific first-hand acquaintance with the circumstances relating to the migration both in Cyprus and in Britain. The necessary background knowledge was already to hand since the author had previously spent about one year in Greece and about six months in Turkey living and working mostly in villages (as an archaeologist), during which time he became closely familiar with Greek and Turkish culture, and learnt to speak Modern Greek fairly fluently. In addition, for the purpose of the present study, a month's visit to Cyprus was undertaken in order to appreciate the specifically Cypriot background, and also to interview officials and other persons on the subject of emigration from the island.

Following this, in order to gain direct personal knowledge of the circumstances and experience of Cypriots in Britain, the author lived for one year in Islington, the area of London in which Cypriot settlement is most concentrated. During this time, and through contact with Cypriots maintained afterwards, the author used informants and 'participant observation' as means of obtaining information about Cypriot migration and settlement. This information has

been not only essential for the interpretation of statistical data (such as that derived from the Censuses), but also of value in itself - as demonstrating, for example, social processes involved in the migration (see especially Chapter 4, which is largely based on the author's own first-hand data).

Thus although this study is based primarily on published, mainly statistical sources, it has drawn as well on the author's own first-hand investigations, both in order to aid interpretation of statistical data and in order to supplement these. Inevitably, on account of both qualitative and quantitative limitations of the data used, the picture of the migration and settlement that is elicited falls short of what might ideally be desired. But since this particular chapter of emigration from Cyprus has now virtually terminated, no further evidence is likely to appear, and so there is little choice but to confine the study to such evidence as is already extant. It must be pointed out, however, that concluding this study at the end of the year 1966 is to some extent arbitrary. The principal reason for ending it then was that 1966 was the year in which the most recent Population Census of Britain to be published was conducted. The selection of 1966 was therefore guided primarily by the availability of evidence: although by that year the annual number of migrants had returned to early post-war levels, the year itself does not represent any particular landmark in the migration as such.

The study is divided into two connected parts: the first of migration, the second of settlement. The first part begins by establishing the extent and character of Cypriot migration to Britain, and then proceeds to examine the various factors which have determined or influenced this movement from Cyprus to Britain. The second part likewise begins by establishing the extent of Cypriot settlement in Britain, and also its geographical distribution; following this, it examines in some detail the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Cypriot settlement, mainly in London.

Footnotes

1 Rose, E.J.B. and associates, Colour and Citizenship, O.U.P. 1969, p. 99, Table 10.1.

2 E.g. Lipman, V.D., Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950, Watts, 1954; Freedman M. (ed.), A Minority in Britain, Vallentine Mitchell, 1955; Krauss, E., Leeds Jewry, Heffer, 1963.

3 Zubrzycki, J., Polish Immigrants in Britain, Nijhoff, 1956; cf. Patterson S., "Polish London", in Centre for Urban Studies, London: Aspects of Change, McGibbon & Kee, 1964.

4 Jackson, J.A., The Irish in Britain, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.

5 Though see the M.A. Thesis by V. Nearchou, "The Assimilation of Cypriot Immigrants in London", Nottingham University, 1960. This was the basis of two articles: George V. (formerly Nearchou) and Millerson G., "The Cypriot Community in London", Race, Vol;. VIII, No. 3, January 1967; and George V. "The Assimilation of Cypriot Immigrants in London", Eugenics Review, Vol. 58, No. 4, December 1966. See also, Oakley, R., "The Cypriots in Britain", Race Today, April 1970.

6 See Peach, C., West Indian Migration to Britain, O.U.P. 1968, for the only other full-length study of such a movement, though one which was more concerned with the distribution of settlement.

7 On the history of Cyprus, see Hill, G., History of Cyprus, Vols. I-IV, Cambridge, 1952, and Alastos, D., Cyprus in History, Zeno, 1955.

8 On the economy of Cyprus during the post-war period, see especially Meyer, A.J., The Economy of Cyprus, Harvard U.P., 1962.

9 For an account of the recent political history of Cyprus, with particular reference to the conflict between Greeks and Turks, see Stephens, R., Cyprus: A Place of Arms, Pall Mall, 1966.

10 See Weir, W.W., Education in Cyprus, Nicosia, 1952.

11 See Racial Discrimination, Political and Economic Planning, 1967.

12 On this, see Oakley, R., "The Cypriot Background" in Oakley, R. (ed.), New Backgrounds: The Immigrant Child at Home and at School, O.U.P. 1968.. On Greek Cypriot village life, see Peristiany, J.G., "Honour and Shame in a Cypriot Highland Village", in Peristiany J.G. (ed.) Honour and Shame, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965. For comparable studies in Greece, see Campbell, J.K., Honour, Family and Patronage, Clarendon Press, 1964, and Friedl, E., Vasilika: A Village in Modern Greece, Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1962; and for Turkey, see Stirling, P., Turkish Village, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965.