

HISTORY OF THE MUNICIPALITY

By Alexis Michaelides

The roots of the present local government of Cyprus and of Larnaka Municipality can be found in the last years of Turkish Domination. There is not enough information until 1864. But, on 8th November 1864, a Law was established by Turkish containing basic provisions for the administration of the Geographical areas of the Ottoman territory that was also valid for Cyprus (1). Since November 1850, there had already been evidence that in Larnaka there was a substandard cleaning system for road and health rules in the city according to a decree issued by the Health Board of Constantinople(2). The implementation of this decree in Larnaka is evidenced in the letter of Moudiris (commander) of Larnaka Haji Omer Sitki to the French ambassador in Larnaka, where there is reference that in Larnaka the guidelines of the decree are strictly applied “for maintaining the health of the citizens of our city”. It seems that the system had a lack of resources and in 1858, there is a letter of the French ambassador Paul Darras to the Governor of Cyprus where he suggests taxation of the trade of the city in order for the city to have income and “for the streets and the market to be maintained, for the marshes to get dry and for useful projects to be constructed for the community...”. As the letter mentions, Moudiris of Larnaka shares the same opinion and the issue shall end without the city being obliged to address Your Excellence for measures of tidying and cleaning (3). The said letter actually set the foundations for the establishment of a municipal authority, something that was first materialized in Larnaka among all the other cities in Cyprus, since in the next year, in 1859, we have a letter of the French Ambassador Paul Darras to the Governor of Cyprus where he praises Moudiris (Commander) of Larnaka and the President of the Municipal Council Haji Omer Sitki for his action to take measures against the marshes of the city (4). The great services of Paul Darras and Haji Omer Sitki for Larnaka have been recognized by following Municipal Councils by naming streets of the city with their names in order to honour them.

After the arrival of British at the island in 1878, the weakness of the Turkish law for the Town Halls was recognized. The British were forced to instantly apply some transitional provisions, based on which two months after the English occupation there was a new Municipal Council of Larnaka with one year of service term (5). In 1880, the British introduced a new legislation and they directly put it in practice. This new legislation included modern democratic provisions and provided for the issuance of balance sheet and stocktaking on behalf of the elected municipal council, and a two-year term of office (6).

In Larnaka, in 1878, the Greek-Swedish doctor, Frederick Heidenstam, who was born in Athens and graduated from the University of Stockholm, was elected as mayor. After the implementation of the new legislation, in 1880 the first Greek-Cypriot Mayor of Larnaka was elected. He was Zeno D. Pierides, who was a merchant dealer and one of the first offsprings of the famous family of Larnaka. In 1882, Charles Watkings, Ambassador of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Director of the Ottoman Bank was elected as Mayor of Larnaka. In 1884, Nicolas Rossos, lawyer and parliament member, was elected as mayor and then he was re-elected until 1908. In 1885, the British abolished all the Ottoman laws related to the Town Halls and gave power to Municipal Councils to impose fees and they redefined their

duties and powers. In 1908, there were small amendments of the law that provided for a change on the composition of the members of the Municipal Council from 11 to 9 and reduction of the Ottoman Councillors from 3 to 2. In 1917, a new amendment increased the Ottoman members to 3 in a total of 10 members. Seven Greek members and three Turkish with a three-year term of office (7). In 1914, England annexed Cyprus and in 1925, it declared it as colony of the Crown. In 1930, the British improved the legislation on municipalities even more. This legislation was included in the codification of the Cypriot laws of 1959 and it continued being applied even after the declaration of the Republic of Cyprus (8).

From 1908 until 1914, Larnaka's mayor was the lawyer Nicolaos Themistocleous. From 1914 until 1917, the mayor was the lawyer and member of the parliament, Evangelos Hadjioannou and from 1917 until 1922, the mayor was the doctor and member of the parliament, Filios Zanettos. In the last 2 years of the term of Filios Zanettos, the Vice-Mayor, doctor Neoclis Kyriazis replaced Filios Zanettos' term because the Mayor was exiled by the British due to its national action. From 1923 until 1929, Larnaka Mayor was the merchant trader, Demetrios N. Demetriou. In his publication, "Larnaka Municipality within Fifty Years", Neoclis Kyriazis describes in detail the rich action of the first Municipal Councillors of Larnaka. The reissue of the book, edited by hieromonk Sofronios G. Michaelides, is a rich source of information for the interested ones. This reissue is provided for sale in the Art Gallery of Larnaka Municipality in Athinon Avenue. After Neoclis Kyriazis, Criton Georgiades undertook the continuation of quoting the History of Larnaka Municipality in his article "Municipal Elections in Larnaka" which was hosted in the publication of the Municipality "Larnaka 2000: the End of a Century" in pages 190 – 229. The issue is provided for sale in the Art Gallery of Larnaka Municipality in Athinon Avenue. In order to end up this brief presentation of the history of Larnaka Municipality, we are citing below the Mayor of the city up until today, with additional information about the development of the relevant legislation until today.

In the elections of 1929, Cyprus Communist Party (C.C.P), which was established in 1926, took part in the elections for the first time but its influence in Larnaka was really small so it supported the combination "isotis" of the candidate Mayor, Kyriakos Serafim (9). The rival Demetrios N. Demetriou was re-elected and the successful Municipal Councillors remained in their positions until 1935 due to the oppressive measures by the British, which were imposed after the October's revolution of people in 1931. In 1932, Mayor D. Demetriou resigned for health reasons, but he remained as Municipal Councillor and in 1932, the Municipal Council elected Georgios Aradippiotis as the new Mayor. Within the frameworks of the oppressive measures by Cyprus' Governor, Palmer, there were no elections in Cyprus until 1943. By a British decree, Georgios Aradippiotis was again appointed as Mayor but with a newly-appointed by the British Municipal Council and they remained in the Municipal Authority of Larnaka from 1935 until 1943, when the new policy of a friendly approach towards the Greek population in order to fight by the side of the British during the 2nd World War, forced the colonial Government to step back and denounce Municipal Elections in 1943.

In the elections of 1943, Demetrios N. Demetriou, head of the National Combination (Ethnikos Syndiasmos), returns back as the winner of the elections and he beat K. Siakallis, who was supported by the newly-established AKEL since C.C.P. was outlawed by the British in 1941. In the elections of 1946, with the support of AKEL, the winner of the elections was the Lawyer Lysos Santamas, who headed of the “Syndiasmos Ethnikis Enotitas” against the “Ethnikos Syndiasmos” and Demetrios N. Demetriou (10). There was approximately the same election scenery in 1949, when Lysos Santamas was re-elected as Mayor and he remained as Mayor until 1953.

In 1953, AKEL felt really strong and proposed its clearly own candidate, Georgios Christodoulides and supported the Independent candidate Municipal Councillor Anniva Francis, who was elected as Vice-Mayor after his electoral success. Due to the urgent situation created due to EOKA fight in 1955-1959 and the Independence in 1960, Georgios Christodoulides and his Municipal Council remained in authority without any elections until 1962 (11).

On 1st January 1963, the Republic of Cyprus terminated the law about the Municipalities and declared all the areas as areas of administration and improvement. The Duties of the Mayor were executed by Larnaka District Officer, Fivos Zachariades for 2 years, until December 1964. In January 1964, based on the Law voted by the Parliament, due to the urgent need created by the Turkish-Cypriot rebellion, a five-member Municipal Committee of Larnaka was appointed, having as President, Zenon D. Pierides, who died in 1967. Annivas Francis was appointed as the new President and he resigned in 1975 and then Kypros Economices had the duties of the president for a few months. In September 1975, the Government appointed Leonidas Kiouppis as the new President of the Municipal committee of Larnaka and he died in 1984. From November 1984, the Municipal Councillor, Loucis Loucaides undertook the duties of the President until June 1986, when the new Law on Municipalities was implemented, based on which there were Municipal Elections where a Mayor was directly elected from the Citizens, and not from the Municipal Council as the colonial law used to provide. The winner was AKEL candidate, Georgios Christodoulides, for a five-year term. The new Municipal Council consisted of 22 Municipal Councillors, 9 from AKEL, 7 from DISY, 4 from DIKO and 2 from EDEK. The doctor Diofantos Chrysostomou of AKEL was elected as the Vice-Mayor. The candidate of the cooperation of DISY-DIKO, Georgios Lycourgos, was the winner in the elections of December 1991. The party composition of the Municipal Council consisted of 9 Municipal Councillors of AKEL, 8 of DISY, 3 of DIKO and 2 of EDEK. Georgios Lycourgos and the cooperation DISY – DIKO were again the winners in the elections of 1996. The party composition of the Council consisted of 9 members of AKEL, 8 of DISY, 4 of DIKO and 1 of EDEK. In both terms of Giorgos Lycourgos, Doctor Nicos Themistokleous of DISY was elected as Vice-Mayor.

In the elections of 2001, the three-party municipal cooperation of AKEL, DIKO, EDEK, and its candidate from AKEL, Andreas Moyseos, were the winners. But due to the increase of the population of Larnaka, the Municipal Council of 2001 consisted of 26 Municipal Councillors. 10 from DISY, 9 from AKEL, 4 from DIKO, 2 from EDEK and 1 from New Horizons (Neoi Orizontes-NEO). Andreas Moyseos, who was again the head of the three-party municipal cooperation, was the winner in the elections of 2006. The composition of the Municipal

Council consisted of 9 members of DISY, 9 of AKEL, 5 of DIKO, 2 of EDEK and 1 of EVROKO. The Vice-Mayor in both terms of Andreas Moyseos was the businessman Alexis Michaelides of DIKO.

Finally, in the elections of 2011, the winner was Andreas Louroutziatis, who was an independent candidate and he was supported by the parties, DISY, EDEK, EVROKO and LASOK. The composition of the Municipal Council consists of 11 members of DISY, 8 of AKEL, 4 of DIKO, 2 of EDEK and 1 of EVROKO. Petros Christodoulou of EDEK was elected as the Vice-Mayor.

1. Loucis Loucaides, "The Local government in Cyprus". KYPRIAKA 1878-1995. Publications of Nicosia Municipality. Nicosia 1986. Page 63.
2. Kratinos Michaelides "Larnaka Municipality – Establishment and First Years". LARNAKA 2000: The End of A Century . Larnaka Municipality's Publications. Larnaka 2002. Page 41.
3. Ibid. Page 42
4. Ibid
5. Neoklis Kyriazis. "Larnaka Municipality Within Fifty Years 1878-1928" Larnaka Municipality's Publications. Larnaka 1995. Page 29.
6. Loucis Loucaides. Page 68.
7. Neoklis Kyriazis. Page 30.
8. Loucis Loucaides.. Page 68, 69.
9. Criton Georgiades, "Municipal Elections in Larnaka 1878 – 1986". LARNAKA 2000: The End of an Era". Page 203.
10. Ibid. Page 206.
11. Ibid Pages 218-223