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*Contemporary History Textbook for 6<sup>th</sup> Grades*  
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Recent Debates on Greek History Textbooks: The Case of the  
*Contemporary History Textbook for 6<sup>th</sup> Grades* by Maria Repousi

This paper aims to analyse one of the recent debates surrounding history textbook writing in Greece. The debate in question was generated by the publication of a history textbook written by a group of historians, led by the historian Maria Repousi. The centuries-long common history of Greeks and Turks has always been a sensitive issue among the public and politicians alike, and a cause of lively debate. With a new perspective on a number of issues, *Contemporary History Textbook for 6th Grades* brought about a debate, which engulfed the whole of Greek society. The debate surrounding the book emphasised major political divisions in Greek society and highlighted the way leading political parties and other groupings perceived major historical issues pertaining to the common past of the two nations.

Since Greece has a long and complicated history, the job of recording or reviewing it is complex and time-consuming. The narration of History since the 1930s has generated an inflexible perception in the minds of Greek people, especially since the Civil War and period of military dictatorship. If we look at the precedents of history textbooks banned since 1974, it becomes clear that the extreme nationalist perspective prevailed in every case. In order to convince the relevant government of the need to withdraw the book, it was always going to be necessary to damage the reputation of the book. In this debate, the writers of the book also became targets. In Repousi's case, the book came under attack for a range of different topics such as downplaying the role of the Greek Church during the Greek Revolution, taking a compromising stance on the Cyprus question, questioning the existence of "Secret Schools" during Ottoman rule, etc.

Maria Repousi<sup>1</sup> and her team applied for funds of 32,000 Euro to finance the writing of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. This was the biggest budget ever given to any Greek historiography project. The textbook was actually co-authored by Hara Andreadou, Aristidis Poutahidis, Armodios Tsivas and Maria Repousi, but it is known as Repousi's book as Repousi was the author who led the team. The team were not given a time limit; they started work on the book in 2003 and

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Repousi was elected as a deputy for the Democratic Left Party (ΔΗΜ.ΑΡ.) for Athens after the general elections, 2012 June.

had it ready for publication 2 years later. As Maria Repousi's book was introduced to children in schools in September 2006, it became a major discussion topic in Greece. Initial reactions to the book were, by and large, positive, and opposition to the book was muted in 2006, but everybody could sense the potential for extremely negative reactions from the nationalist bloc of the country. After concisely defining the textbook's major characteristics and special topics, this paper finally focuses on the debate surrounding the book and discusses major arguments put forward by the main parties in the debate.

## **I. The Debate**

### **1. Major Characteristics of the Textbook**

When the book was introduced to the public, its length became a matter of debate as it was far shorter than had been expected. Repousi clearly stated that her textbook was concise and met the requirements set by the European Union regarding the size of textbooks. When she was interviewed, she said...

The textbook has no size limitations; it contains a disproportionately large amount of material. How big should a book be for a child of 11 or 12 years old who has history lessons twice a week? Other European states use shorter textbooks with fewer pages, or a larger book that is for the first three years of primary school. The problem is the vast amount of material the book must cover. It's not the choice of the writing team. It complied with the demands of the syllabus. This is something that must change in our books, so that our teachers and above all, our children can breathe.<sup>2</sup>

Another topic of debate concerned the methodology of writing the book: the textbook appears to be strikingly different as far as the quantity and quality of visuals it contains. The pages contain 321 images, which is far more than anything published before. The visuals cover many different forms: photographs, maps, paintings, graphics, timelines, portraits and thumbnails. The visuals account for almost 30-35% of the book. The Greek media questioned whether this much space dedicated to visual aids was useful for pupils or not. At first sight, it seems helpful to the children due to the fact that the visuals stimulate their interest and curiosity. However, visuals of this kind seem to create their own problems and debates. It is

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<sup>2</sup> "Educational pretext for ideological attack", *International Herald Tribune*, 4 April 2007, [http://users.auth.gr/~marrep/PS\\_REPOUSI/ENG/PUBLICATIONS/HERALD%20TRIBUNE.pdf](http://users.auth.gr/~marrep/PS_REPOUSI/ENG/PUBLICATIONS/HERALD%20TRIBUNE.pdf) [accessed on 10 January 2013].

possible to argue that the visuals may undermine the children's ability to learn history by reading. Another problem with the visuals was that the textbook seemed to be illustrated with less dramatic pictures than previous books.

## 2. Emergence of the Debate

Maria Repousi aimed to encourage 11-12 year-old children to think and question their own history with her 6<sup>th</sup> grade history textbook. In order to achieve this, the book's writing team gave the narrative side of events greater emphasis. Maria Repousi especially tried to avoid stereotypes such as the reproduction of national and historical myths. She also put aside the idealisation of what it means to be Greek and the victimisation of Hellenism. She emphatically expresses that **history battles** do not take place in her book. During the autumn of 2006 Marietta Giannakou, as Minister of Education, introduced the textbook into schools and it was she who subsequently faced the initial wave of criticism. The critics focused on several points raised by the textbook stating that the Greeks had not been exposed to as much pressure from the Ottomans as the previous Greek historiography claimed to be the case. Another important accusation levied against the book was that it had been geared to moderate the historical background of Turkish-Greek relations. One of the reasons that the debate maintained momentum was that those who supported the textbook appeared, at least in the eyes of the public, not to refute the arguments against it. No matter what the supporters of the book did to prevent its withdrawal, those who strove to ban the book did not diminish their efforts.

The Orthodox Church took the lead and became the torchbearer of the circles who opposed the textbook. The bishops became, and remained, the mouthpiece of the opposition, calling for the authorities to take action against the text. The Church claimed that the textbook attempted to belittle the extent of atrocities and brutalities that the Greeks had suffered under the *Turkokratia*. The controversy was confined to historians and academicians until Archbishop Christodoulos raised the issue in a speech given at the University of Athens in June 2006, galvanising public opinion.

How can you show the children an impure history? European Authorities must not renounce what we are. Why should not we, the Greeks, honour the richness of our history?' 'We have history and tradition and it is a crime of extreme

betrayal trying to abolish these things for which our fathers fought. (...) We are about to sacrifice everything what the progressive forces tell us to do.<sup>3</sup>  
We have our objections. A special committee of the Church examines the voids and weaknesses and very soon we will address the Ministry.<sup>4</sup>

Archbishop Christodoulos got wide support from the nationalist bloc. The first reaction to Christodoulos's statements came from the Minister of Education, Marietta Giannakou...

The books are not going to be changed just because one group or another wants that to happen.<sup>5</sup>

As Archbishop Christodoulos was leaving the University, he made his stance public in front of the TV cameras, urging the authorities to expel the book from the curriculum.

We all wait for Mr. Prime Minister, with his sensitivities as a Greek and a Macedonian, to instruct the necessary changes to be made to the book before it is too late<sup>6</sup>.

In the following days, the impact of Christodoulos's striking statement started to be seen across Greece. The debate widened and everybody seemed to have an opinion on it. From the guy in the *taverna* to the Prime Minister, all chose their side in the debate. The 6<sup>th</sup> Pontus Hellenes' Global Conference made the first concerted attempt to have the book withdrawn. Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis also voiced his reservations in a speech and the members of the conference subsequently condemned the book unanimously. All the public sectors seemed to compete to condemn the book. This swiftly spreading awareness of the debate led, rather unexpectedly, to a downturn in demonstrations, broadcasts and web-based organisations by people, who feared the government's reaction.

### 3. Rekindling of the Debate

The debate engulfed large segments of society and became a national issue within a short space of time. People from all walks of life expressed their opinions on the book. The Greek

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<sup>3</sup> 'Θυσίες στο βωμό της ελληνοτουρκικής φιλίας' [Sacrifices on the altar of Greek-Turkish friendship], *In.gr News*, 23 January 2007, <http://news.in.gr/greece/article/?aid=772560> [accessed on 9 January 2013].

<sup>4</sup> "Ενστάσεις για τα νέα σχολικά βιβλία έχει η Εκκλησία" [The church has objections against the new schoolbooks], *In.gr News*, 12 September 2006, <http://www.in.gr/news/article.asp?lngEntityID=737870> [accessed on 9 January 2013].

<sup>5</sup> "Ενστάσεις μπορεί να υπάρχουν, τα βιβλία δεν αλλάζουν, δήλωσε η υπουργός Παιδείας" [There may be objections, the books will not change, says the Minister of Education], *In.gr News*, 14 September 2006, <http://www.in.gr/news/article.asp?lngEntityID=738628> [accessed on 9 January 2013].

<sup>6</sup> "Το Βιβλίο – Οι νέοι φάκελοι" (The Book – New Folders), ΣΚΑΙ, <http://folders.skai.gr/main/theme?id=17&locale=el> [accessed on 10 April 2013].

Communist Party claimed that publication of the book was made possible by foreign sponsorship. Likewise, the radical nationalist party, Golden Dawn burned the book in *Sintagma* Square in Athens during the national holiday on 25 March, the anniversary of the 1821 revolution against the Ottoman Empire. A Greek-Turkish Football match on 24 March 2007 just prior to the national holiday exacerbated the debate. One day before the condemnation of the textbook, there was a European Football Championship Qualification match between Turkey and Greece in Karaiskakis Stadium in Athens. The result of the game was 4-1 with Turkey emerging as the winner, and meanwhile the Greeks were celebrating the anniversary of independence from Turkish sovereignty. A large number of Greek supporters dressed in traditional Greek costumes from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the game, approximately 30 Greek Neo-Nazis burned several copies of the debated history textbook in protest. Archbishop Christodoulos also voiced his views concerning the events of 25 March and stated his view that the new textbook aims to **enslave the youth**.

They challenge even March 25 (the date chosen as the symbolic start of the revolution, to coincide with the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary), the banner of the revolution raised by (Bishop) Paleon Patron Germanos, and the heroes Kolokotronis, Makrygiannis, and all those heroes who in their struggle said first 'for the faith' and then 'for the fatherland'.<sup>7</sup>

The strictures intensified towards the end of 2006 and had become an avalanche by the time of the Greek general elections on 16 September 2007. Repousi mentions that limited criticism of the book had been expected by the authors, they were however taken by surprise by the defamatory reaction that soon prevailed.

#### **4. Contentious Issues in the Textbook**

There were several controversial issues raised during the textbook dispute. The leading actors of the debate carefully considered the sensitivities of the Greek people and deliberately focussed on the more inflammatory issues. Throughout Greek historiography, textbooks have tried to show the barbarism of the Turks, whilst on the other side, Turkish textbooks simply portrayed the same incidents as Turkish victories with no mention of atrocities.

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<sup>7</sup> "Battle royal over history book", *Athens News*, George Gilson, 23 March 2007, [http://www.athensnews.gr/old\\_issue/13227/15899](http://www.athensnews.gr/old_issue/13227/15899) [accessed on 9 January 2013].

**Secret Schools (*Krypho Scholio*)** is one of the issues, which the textbook debate brought into the public sphere: whether clandestine schools ever existed during the Ottoman rule. The *Krypho scholio* issue was taught to children over the years with a mythic nationalist view. The strong belief in this myth became widespread during the War of Independence in 1821. Many Greek people still believe that such schools existed, although this has never been proved by any academic research. Not surprisingly, it was one of the points that the Repousi textbook raised and challenged as a nationalist myth. In this respect, its challenge of the *Krypho scholio* stood out in stark contrast to the nationalist narratives of previous textbooks, which attached great significance to the *Krypho scholio*. Likewise, while all textbooks previously published used the famous painting by Nicolaos Gyzis, the Repousi book did not use this picture. Gyzis's historical painting had an enormous impact on many generations and it became a very famous and popular painting in Greece. Subsequently the fact that it was ignored by Maria Repousi and her co-authors was unacceptable for many people. German journalist Amalia Van Gent explains...

Maria Repousi and her group decided to ignore the legend of the 'secret school' in the new book. According to the legend, which originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Greek language and culture only survived thanks to the efforts of Orthodox priests who resisted a ban imposed by the Ottoman Empire and secretly taught children in churches and monasteries. The picture by the famous painter Nicolaos Gyzis, showing a white-bearded Pope reading to a group of girls and boys by candlelight, has influenced generations of Greeks, but it has little to do with historical reality. The fact is Greek schools were not forbidden under the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup>

**The Waterfront Throng “Συνωστισμός”** issue may be the most remarkable in this whole conflict. Just one word used by the textbook writers, revived Greece's *history war*. When we take a look at the national history of Greece, we see that the *Asia Minor Catastrophe* is arguably the most sensitive and tragic issue. In the book, the topic is titled “Asia Minor: Expedition and Catastrophe”. The authors of the textbook dedicated half a page to the development and outcome of the Asia Minor tragedy. The narration of the case was seen to be quite reasonable by the nationalists, but the last sentence of the paragraph changed the whole atmosphere...

On 27 August 1922, the Turkish army enters Smyrna. Thousands of Greeks jostle (crowd) at the port and try to leave for Greece.

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<sup>8</sup> “The dispute over a Greek history book”, *euro-topics (Neue Zürcher Zeitung)*, Amalia Van Gent, 12 April 2007, Switzerland, [http://www.eurotopics.net/en/home/autorenindex/autor\\_van\\_gent\\_amalia/](http://www.eurotopics.net/en/home/autorenindex/autor_van_gent_amalia/) [accessed on 10 January 2013].

This problematic and new way of describing this case drew a widespread reaction from everyone. The aim of using this word was an attempt to *soften* the dramatic common history between Turkey and Greece by writing a *lighter narrative* and using more flexible and compliant language. “*Synostismos*” means congestion, huddling, jostling, throng, *etc.* As the majority of the Greeks had relatives in Asia Minor and lived through this tragedy, the attempt to embellish the story was intolerable for Greek people. The press largely started to accuse the authors of deliberately misguiding people with the wrong information. This turned the spotlight on Maria Repousi. In every speech, she was forced to defend her textbook, maintaining it did not contain any deliberate errors. On the other hand, she welcomed the misguided opinions on the “Asia Minor” topic. The only allowance she made during the debate...

We said that this was an unfortunate wording that will be changed in the first correction of the book. It introduces a new method of history teaching and learning, which depends largely on using images as well. I feel pushed in a corner. It’s not easy being at the center of public attention, with name-calling.<sup>9</sup>

Another issue, which proved controversial, dealt with the seizure of Greek boys from their families during Ottoman sovereignty in order for them to serve in the Janissary corps. The history textbooks in Balkan countries, including Greek books, define this case as “**Child Levy**”. This term refers to children as the levy imposed by the Ottoman Empire on the non-Muslim minorities. These events are described in Repousi’s textbook as “recruitment” rather than the more usual “kidnapping”. In the eyes of the book’s opponents this was considered to be ignorance of Turkish barbarism.

## 5. Conflict on the Rampage

The Greek Church remained the leading opposition party in the debate. Even such disparate political parties as KKE and Golden Dawn, came together and put up a united front against the book. The new parliament, formed after the general elections in 2007, also changed the balance of power within the New Democracy party. New deputies that came in were proponents of the withdrawal of the textbook. On the other hand, the Socialist Party and Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA) were against its withdrawal. The Popular Orthodox Rally

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<sup>9</sup> “Battle royal over history book”, *Athens News*, George Gilson, 23 March 2007, [http://www.athensnews.gr/old\\_issue/13227/15899](http://www.athensnews.gr/old_issue/13227/15899) [accessed on 11 January 2013].



(LAOS) also started to become involved in this debate. They gained ten deputy seats in the elections of September 2007, which subsequently led to them having a higher media profile. Their deputy, Adonis Georgiadis joined a television broadcast on TELEASTY (a TV channel owned by LAOS) a few days before the elections and said...

Don't vote for New Democracy (ND) again because they support this textbook and this book undermines our national image. Maria Repousi has academic freedom in Greece, but why does my child have to read this book especially?

There were also other arraignments against the book. The website "*Αντιβάρo*<sup>10</sup>" has been one of the most efficient and aggressive voices in this debate. In 2006, Dimitris Natsios, who is a teacher, commented on Repousi's textbook after it was first published. In an interview on ΣΚΑΪ TV, he said...

If I need to use the phrase of Commander Makrigiannis, 'While I was reading, my eyes were burning'. I could not believe what I saw. The book completely deconstructed our history...

He wrote an article opposing the book and decided to send it to websites who could publicise the case and mobilise society against the book, which is how the website Antibaro became aware of the textbook. Its founder, Andreas Stalidis launched a campaign to collect signatures calling for the recall of the book. 4.000 signatures were gathered in a very short time. The founder of this website points out that the list of signatures against the book reached its peak at the end of 2006 with 11,000 signatures and he also adds that this list included many academicians and historians from Germany, USA, England, Luxemburg and Greece. On the other side of the debate, 500 academicians gathered to sign a letter that urged the authorities to keep the book in schools.

The textbook was presented to the public as pro-Turkish by most of the parties involved. In addition, the majority claimed that this textbook was financed by Europeans, Americans and Turks, referring especially to meetings of the Greek and Turkish Ministers of Education concerning the bilateral changes to textbooks. The opponents of the textbook claimed it was a product of the **New World Order**. Whilst feverishly campaigning for the elections, Psomiades, the prefect of Thessaloniki, appeared in a television debate...

Those who want to participate in the New Order. Personally, I don't want to participate in any Order. I belong to Greece. Ok? And I would say that all the nations belong to Greece. We are the ones who taught history, civilization,

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<sup>10</sup> *Antibaro* means balance weight in Greek. See <http://www.antibaro.gr/category/english>.

democracy, freedom and these are things we should not forget. I don't want to be in the thrall of anybody. I want to live, to close my eyes, to teach my children the things that I learnt. And I consider that I have learnt the facts of history. If we don't react, we will all be accomplices in it. I, personally, don't want to be an accomplice in the crime called genocide of memory. I talked about a New Order of things. I said that this book has been written for others, not for Greek children.

The controversy over the book reached its peak during the pre-election period. Former New Democracy and PASOK member Stelios Papathemelis announced the formation of his new extreme right wing political party just a few months before the general elections in September 2007. He was hoping to take advantage of the nationalist atmosphere in order to gain the votes of the nationalist bloc. Before the elections he was frequently shown on camera making furious accusations against the government and criticising the book. But his plan did not come to fruition and he was not elected in the Greek legislative elections of 2007, his new party "Democratic Revival" only took 0.8% of the vote. The elections of 2007 brought glory and failure to the different nationalist blocs in Greece. Whilst Papathemelis's "Democratic Revival" failed to get seats in the parliament, Georgios Karatzaferis's "Popular Orthodox Rally" managed to get 10 deputies with a total of 3.8% of the vote.

The election period showed also its unpleasant side to the book's writing team. Before the elections the opponents of the book were unable to convince the government to recall it, but they continued to campaign. Then articles about the private lives of the writing team started to appear in the media. In order to defeat the case for the book, it was necessary to damage the reputation of the writing team. The tabloids violated the private lives of the writing team. Photos of them in swimsuits, taken and used without permission, covered the press. This gives us a good insight into the prevailing atmosphere during the history wars. In this same vein, it must be said that nationalist reaction has been the same whenever someone has tried to change the structure of history education in Greece.

## **II. The Stalemate**

We can divide the controversy into two main parts, the first being "the period before correction" and the second being "the period before withdrawal". The correction process truly reached a stalemate. There were many attempts to break the deadlock by both sides of the debate yet no one could manage to satisfy the other side. This impasse led all parties

concerned to step back for a while. The Ministry of Education therefore decided to make some corrections to the textbook in order to gratify the opposing side in the case.

## 1. Need for Revision

In the opinion of the nationalist bloc, the most troublesome and indefensible part of the book concerned the Catastrophe of Asia Minor. The use of just one word by the authors whipped up the dispute. The narrative style of this historical event stirred bitter memories in people that led to them opposing the textbook. The theologian George Mustakis describes the situation with these words...

The book tries to eliminate the words which challenge and brings in front of us the bitter memories.

It's a good thing, but we are not mature (enough) to accept such a book.<sup>11</sup>

During the debate, one of the issues that came to the fore was the language used in the textbooks. Those who supported the book claimed that the use of softer language in history textbook writing is crucial. The steadily increasing tension led Minister Marietta Giannakou to give a statement over the demands for withdrawal...

You cannot write all the truths on 150 pages. The book has imperfections and we are going to do what is necessary, but I am not going to withdraw another book as has happened in the past with schoolbooks, which contained obvious inaccuracies.<sup>12</sup>

Marietta Giannakou continued to support the textbook although it still came under heavy criticism. Having reached stalemate, she conceded that corrections would be made if necessary. But she emphasised that only the **didactical problems** of the book would be improved. After the minister's statements, Maria Repousi softened slightly towards the idea of correcting the book, but she still insisted...

The editorial team will not accept corrections from the so-called 'nationalist lobby'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Greek Church attacks history book", *BBC News*, 27 April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6525899.stm> [accessed on 10 January 2013].

<sup>12</sup> "Απάντηση Γιαννάκου στις ενστάσεις της Εκκλησίας για την Ιστορία της Στ' Δημοτικού" [Giannakou's answer to objections by the Church to the history book], *In.gr News*, 26 January 2007.

<sup>13</sup> 'Greek-history textbook stirs flame', *Turkish Daily News*, 26 March 2007, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=greek-history-textbook-stirs-flame-2007-03-26> [accessed on 10 January 2013].

## 2. Demands for Correction

The opposition side of the debate claimed that the textbook received foreign funding, especially from the Americans and Turks, referring to the meetings of Greek and Turkish Ministers of Education about bilateral agreements concerning history textbooks. Especially, the period known as ‘earthquake diplomacy’ after 1999 gathered Greece and Turkey. Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem and his counterpart Georgios Papandreou avoided a confrontational style of policy making. Their meetings led to the organisation of a committee, set up to bilaterally revise the history and geography textbooks of both countries. Their aim was to remove ultra-nationalist, hostile and unkind expressions from the books. Accusations by the nationalist bloc that the Repousi book was a ‘Turkish-friendly textbook’ referred to this process. Moreover, the leader of the nationalist party LAOS, Georgios Karatzafereis said in relation to the issues...

The Karamanlis government is hostage to the Papandreou-Cem agreements and poisons the spirit of the Greek youth. The obsessive protection of Ms. Repousi and the rest of the leftists who cooperated in the publication of this historic monstrosity will have consequences that will reach the ballot box.

Claims that the writing team acted under the influence of agreements made by Papandreou and Cem, were denied by both Maria Repousi and the Pedagogical Institute. Afterwards, the Ministry released a questionnaire asking teachers as well as students their opinions about the book, so that the book could be revised according to the feedback. At the same time, there was also a dispute in the academic world. Representatives from five scientific journals gathered and submitted an appeal to the highest court “in order to categorize” the textbook as **unconstitutional**. But in opposition, 500 academicians petitioned the education authorities to keep the book on the curriculum. They also organised a press conference on 5 March 2007 in support of the Repousi book. The Ministry also decided to ask the view of the **Academy of Athens**. The writing team of the book did not like the idea of taking the opinion of the Academy of Athens because of the conservative structure of the institution. Moreover, Maria Repousi denounced the Academy of Athens as having dark pages in its own history because of its affirmative stance towards the dictatorial regime in Greece between 1967 and 1974. During this process, a draft report by the Academy was leaked, and subsequently published by the weekly newspaper *Paron*. In this draft report, the Academy drew attention to 70 points within the textbook. The report emphasised that this textbook did not serve national benefits or the national spirit in the context of Greek national memory.

A school history book must be well edited, follow rules of historiography, attract students and earn their trust and that of their families, teachers and other possible readers. The book in question is faulty on all these counts.

When the official report was released on 22 March 2007 the issue of recalling the book was again publicly raised. At this juncture, the Cypriots joined the debate as the same book was also taught in Greek Cypriot schools. One of the contentious issues around which debate arose was the “Cyprus Question” in the book. Their demand from the writing team was to ignore the map, which shows the partition of the island. In addition to the map, the book was hoping to maintain the referendum spirit in order to solve the Cyprus issue. But the sensitivities raised by the Greek Cypriots did not fully enter the Greek part of the debate as the Cypriots had hoped.

The writing team intended to focus on the mistakes in order to produce a more accurate work. However, Maria Repousi emphasised that the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the textbook would retain its structure and stated in an interview...

We are at the stage of studying the comments. The writers have to be prudent because the idea is to move forward, not backward to where the scaremongering and undemocratic tactics want to take us.<sup>14</sup>

The opponents of the textbook were still asking for dramatic changes to be made. During the same interview, Maria Repousi gave some idea as to what the upcoming corrections would entail...

The structure of the book, the overall methodological and scientific basis, will not change. We are open to such changes, but they will emerge from an assessment of the “teachability” of the book. If teachers have difficulty managing the new method, we will take it seriously into account and work with the Pedagogical Institute on finding ways to rectify it. That will not be in the coming school year but the one after.<sup>15</sup>

This time the writing team appeared to be prepared to compromise. Furthermore, Maria Repousi was looking towards the Pedagogical Institute for cooperation if necessary. Whilst the authors of the book were enthusiastic about its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; they were also concerned about the echoes of what had previously been said in schools ...

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<sup>14</sup> “Educational pretext for ideological attack”, *International Herald Tribune*, 4 April 2007, [http://users.auth.gr/~marrep/PS\\_REPOUSI/ENG/PUBLICATIONS/HERALD%20TRIBUNE.pdf](http://users.auth.gr/~marrep/PS_REPOUSI/ENG/PUBLICATIONS/HERALD%20TRIBUNE.pdf) [accessed on 10 January 2013].

<sup>15</sup> “Educational pretext for ideological attack”, *International Herald Tribune*, 4 April 2007, [http://users.auth.gr/~marrep/PS\\_REPOUSI/ENG/PUBLICATIONS/HERALD%20TRIBUNE.pdf](http://users.auth.gr/~marrep/PS_REPOUSI/ENG/PUBLICATIONS/HERALD%20TRIBUNE.pdf) [accessed on 10 January 2013].

We should expect an even better book. That is our goal and we hope teachers will help us with that and refuse to see the book through the eyes of the critics. They must stick to their own opinion and not get caught up in partisan pettiness. In my view, the biggest problem for the book is not what is being said in public and on television but the echoes of that shouting in schools. The book will be taught from the start of the school year in all Greek-Cypriot schools, and it is an incredible act of political irresponsibility to run down a book that the state and the competent authorities have deemed suitable for schools. Besides, this book is already in all schoolbags.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Major Corrections to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

Changes were made to the book after the agreement of the writing team, Marietta Giannakou and the Pedagogical Institute. In 2007 August, the book had a considerable print-run. When we consider previous books, 175,000 copies was a huge amount for history textbook publishing. But the television shows, the press reports, countless bloggers, forums, *etc.*, had generated large scale interest. When the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition was published, the controversy over the book became one of the most popular subjects in daily life. With the upcoming elections on the horizon, every politician was talking about the issue in order to get popular support from the people. For the team of authors, it was difficult to meet the expectations of the extreme nationalists. Contrary to expectations, only 6 pages were corrected. And these corrections were hardly dramatic ones because in many cases only single words or sentences were modified. To give an example...

- Exodus: The leaving of Greeks from Asia Minor (Page 103 – 2006 edition)  
Exodus: Here, the **dramatic** leaving of Greeks from Asia Minor (2007 edition)
- On 27 August 1922, the Turkish army enters Smyrna. Thousands of Greeks **jostle (crowd)** at the port and try to leave for Greece. (Page 100 – 2006 edition of the book)  
Hundred thousands of Greeks were driven in **dramatic circumstances** to leave their houses and to search desperately a way to leave for Greece. (2007 edition of the book)

No methodological or ideological changes were made to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the book. The writing team focused on editing the existing words or sentences. The likelihood of satisfying both sides with these corrections was quite low and the release of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition did not stop opponents campaigning for the book's complete withdrawal.

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<sup>16</sup> "Educational pretext for ideological attack", *International Herald Tribune*, 4 April 2007, [http://users.auth.gr/~marrep/PS\\_REPOUSI/ENG/PUBLICATIONS/HERALD%20TRIBUNE.pdf](http://users.auth.gr/~marrep/PS_REPOUSI/ENG/PUBLICATIONS/HERALD%20TRIBUNE.pdf) [accessed on 10 January 2013].

#### 4. Withdrawal of the Book

Minister of Education Marietta Giannakou did not withdraw the book, but in order to contain the controversy she suggested locating the mistakes within the book and correcting them as soon as possible. Papatthemelis criticised the book in a debate on television...

The book is neither teachable nor corrigible. Consequently, the recall of the book is mandatory.<sup>17</sup>

The installation of the new government after the 2007 general election finally brought this seemingly endless debate to a close. New Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs, Evripidis Styliniades heeded the demands of the opponent bloc and announced the recall of the book from the curriculum at a press conference on 25 September 2007...

Due to the significant concerns about the appropriate content of the history book for the final year of elementary school, it was decided to withdraw the book and temporarily replace it with the book used in previous years.

In addition to the withdrawal of Repousi's book, he announced the return of the previous textbook, which had been written by the commission in 1980s. The decision to withdraw the book featured on the front pages of the newspapers. This drew a variety of reactions from every walk of socio-political life. Protests from historical quarters, negative comments from the new minister and congratulations from politicians and journalists became the last reported reactions before the subject finally began to fade from the limelight. The attacks by the Greek Church and the coalition of nationalist parties against the book before the elections provided convenient excuses for the withdrawal. After the replacement of the textbook, the tensions surrounding the issue quickly reduced. One reason the debate had rumbled on into 2006 and 2007 was that the opponents of the book would not allow the history writing experts to discuss the book. The historians were not able to play an effective role in the controversy. So they in turn formed an opposition bloc and drew the public's attention to the most sensitive issues within the book. Bitter memories and nationalist rhetoric were highlighted in public and therefore no one could find a chance to talk about the quality of the book. The debate appeared to have only one aim and that was to bury the book alive. Which is why the debate ceased when the book was withdrawn.

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<sup>17</sup> 'Σε οριακό σημείο για να είναι έτοιμο το βιβλίο της Ιστορίας' [Minor point before the history book is ready], *TA NEA Online* (26 July 07), <http://www.tanea.gr/ellada/article/?aid=31876> [accessed on 10 January 2013].

On the other hand the new government did not intend to lose the opportunity to make political capital from the discussion over the book. The new minister, Styliniadis announced that the Government intended to seek writers for the preparation of a completely new history textbook. But PASOK held Karamanlis responsible for using the textbook case to gain political advantage without considering the repercussions on Greek historiography. Also SYRIZA emphasised that this withdrawal reflected the nationalist side of New Democracy. This was perceived as an implicit coalition between New Democracy and LAOS in parliament. KKE was one of the parties who had asked for the book to be recalled during the debate, but the withdrawal and the process that followed did not satisfy the party members.

### **III. Discussion**

The main question brought up by the debate was whether the parties used this textbook as a political instrument or not. Interestingly, political parties with completely different ideologies gathered and stood against the book. The previous book for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade was written in 1988. In 18 years, so many things had changed in the world and Greece as well that a new textbook was certainly needed. As the debate was rekindled, most people were suspicious as to whether this book would meet expectations or not. First of all, I can argue that this book introduced methodological innovations such as an increase in visual aids and a reduction in long paragraphs of text to be learnt. These innovations were perceived in different ways. Greek history professors supported the new methodology applied by the book even though its content and narration of certain events was unsatisfactory to some of those academicians. There was general consensus among most of the historians in Greece that the so-called old-fashioned historiography should have been changed. Those in opposition to the book emphasised that national values and heroes are much more important than the methodology of the textbook. The team of authors took other European history textbooks as a pattern during their work, which led to the creation of a less voluminous book than had been expected. The intensity of the visuals in the book is the most remarkable point from my point of view because the writers peculiarly focused on the use of visuals. Their projection was to guide pupils to learn history in a visual context. They preferred to use small paragraphs attached to several visuals. Covering the whole page with pictures did not become a matter of hesitation for them to be criticized because of the methodology. We cannot maintain that the book



contains no national figures at all. I can argue that their visual selection was made meticulously. The aim was to highlight the well-known important figures and paintings on the one hand and to avoid the stimulating/controversial ones on the other. In addition there are some pictures in the book, which aim to soften the strained relations with Greece's neighbours, especially Turkey. They chose to use softer language when narrating the common history without waiting for bilateral agreements between Turkey and Greece. Instead of displaying the barbarism of Turks, Repousi's textbook aimed to share the bitterness of common memories. Therefore, Repousi's book was criticised for serving Turkish benefits. The only picture showing the entrance of the Greek army into Smyrna, was the only picture removed from the book. Nevertheless the writing team accepted responsibility and revised the narration and the picture selection in the second edition of the book. But this was not enough to placate those on the nationalist side of the debate.

Topics such as downplaying the role of the Greek Church during the Greek Revolution, the compromising approach to the Cyprus question, the *Waterfront throng* issue, the lack of the Secret School issue were used by the nationalist side of the debate as political weapons against the Government just before the general elections. If this book had not been published, they would have searched for other material to exploit nationalist tendencies. All the nationalist parties, especially LAOS, pledged to the Greek people that they would withdraw this textbook if they came to power. As a result of these promises, the conservative parties gained a lot of votes in the 2007 elections, but they still did not come to power. New Democracy was also at the centre of the debate. They had granted permission for the book to be published. But a few months before the elections, the polls showed a considerable downturn in their share of votes. All of a sudden, recalling the book became one of New Democracy's election promises. When they were returned to power, the withdrawal of the book became their first priority.

While the withdrawal of the book did not damage Turkish-Greek relations, it did interrupt the bilateral process of changing textbooks. As a result, this textbook was only removed from the Greek Curriculum; it was (and is) still available in bookstores. The fact that there were no obstructions to its publication after the elections show us how the book was used as a political instrument. The book may well have some imperfections, mistakes or misleading content, but it had to be supported to improve it in every sense. The intentions of the authors, to soften the previous narration of history, proved to be misguided and this textbook has itself been consigned to history.

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