

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

PAR-14

Kupros--First Impressions

American Research Institute in Turkey
Serencebey Yokuşu 61-63/10-11
Beşiktaş Istanbul
TURKEY

5 January 1986

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Dear Peter,

In late November, the S. S. Universe arrived in Istanbul en route from Alexandria, bearing Dennison Rusinow, a former Fellow of the Institute of Current World Affairs now employed by the Universities Field Staff International. Denny has covered Cyprus for the Field Staff for a good many years, and I had originally intended to meet the old salt in Nicosia, where he had planned to spend a few days before linking up with the Universe in Egypt; in the end, however, I decided to delay my own trip to the Greek part of the island by a few weeks. The Greek Cypriots had announced that they would be electing a new parliament on the 8th of December, and I intended to be there for the event. In the course of an election campaign, as I had learned in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus last summer, much comes to light. In any case, it would be possible to debrief Denny when he got to Istanbul--which is precisely what I did. We roamed the great city for a day or two, had lunch one afternoon with some of the political scientists at Boğaziçi University, took an overnight trip out to the charming Anatolian town of Bursa, and in spare moments thrashed out the Cyprus situation as best we could.

Thereafter, I journeyed with Denny to Athens aboard the Universe and then, when his wife Mary flew in from Vienna for a weekend of freedom from her domestic chores at home and her increasing responsibilities at the United Nations establishment there, we hopped in a car and took off for the Mani--to tour that strange and desolate region in the southern Peloponnese and to catch lunch in Kardamyli with Paddy and Joan Leigh Fermor. All in all, it was a splendid break from my ordinary pursuits, and I learned a great deal in the process. By way of compensation, I was able over Christmas, which I spent in Vienna with the Rusinows this year as last, to pass on a certain amount of information concerning Greek Cypriot affairs that had not come to the surface during Denny's brief sojourn on the island. The three weeks I spent in Cyprus were fruitful, as I hope this and subsequent letters will make clear.

I

If an apolitical tourist relatively unfamiliar with the Levant were to fly to Larnaca Airport in search of sun, salt water, and unfamiliar sights, and then to rent a car and motor heedlessly through the two-thirds of Cyprus still left in Greek hands, he would be apt to get lost. Virtually all of the maps show auto routes that are no longer there; and, at least in the capital, the road signs still point out the way to Nicosia International Airport, Morphou, Kyrenia, and Famagusta--and to villages and other towns that none of the island's Greek citizens but the few still residing in obscure corners in the Turkish North have been able to visit at any time during the last decade.

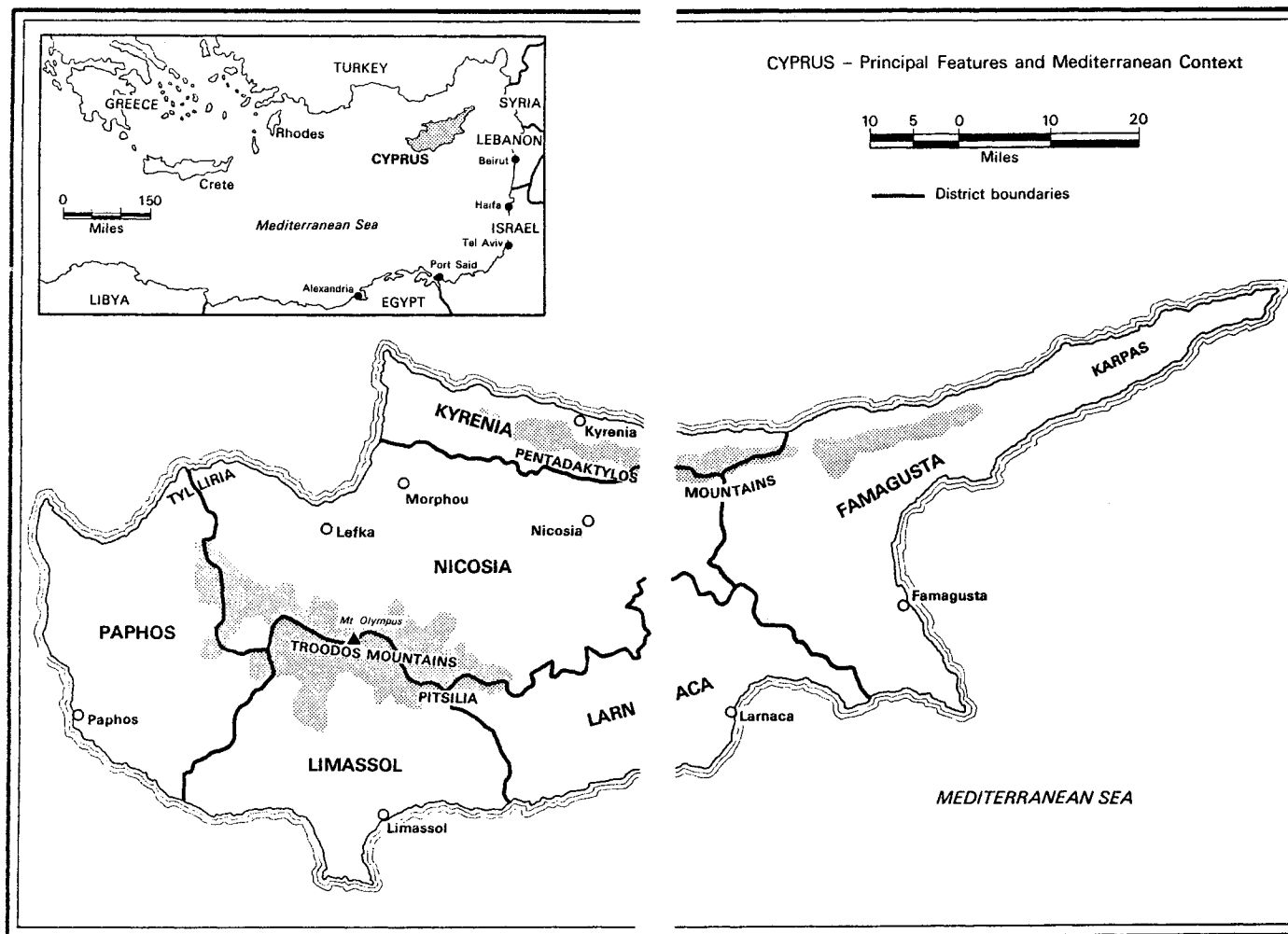


Road to Nowhere

Even a reporter reasonably familiar with recent events will momentarily be puzzled by similar phenomena from time to time. For example, in the past, the Greek Cypriots voted in six large electoral districts: the regions of Nicosia, Kyrenia, Famagusta, Larnaca, Limassol, and Paphos. This they still do. Though a refugee driven from a village near Kyrenia may actually now live in Paphos or somewhere in the vicinity of Limassol and may cast his ballot at a polling station not far distant from his new home, he is still treated politically as a citizen of the Kyrenia region. His ballot is counted with those of his former neighbors, and his deputy in parliament represents the voters of Kyrenia. As you can no doubt imagine, this causes considerable chaos on election night. Civil servants have to transport ballot boxes from all over Greek Cyprus to one central location so that the Kyrenia vote can be tabulated.

The confusion is not entirely fortuitous. For understandable reasons, the Greek Cypriots simply cannot yet bring themselves to redraw the maps, take down the old road signs, and alter the electoral arrangements. That would be too painful. To do so would be to acknowledge that the division of Cyprus is not just a temporary aberration, a bad dream resulting from the foul presence of a barbaric invader, a misfortune clearly destined in the fullness of time

to pass into oblivion. To make the required changes would be to confer a species of finality and even legitimacy on the course of recent events and to accept the island's partition between Cyprus' Greek and its Turkish inhabitants as a quasi-permanent, if not ultimately irreversible fact of Cypriot affairs. To do so would be to conclude that the island's Hellenes must ultimately accommodate not only their practices to their newfound situation, but also their thoughts and, what is even more telling, their deepest aspirations.



Cypriot Electoral Districts

Such a decision would be fraught with profound implications for the cultural ethos of the island's Hellenic majority. Many, if not most of the Cypriot Greeks would prefer to ignore or deny their plight if the acknowledgment of its full implications should require that they also give up the largely metaphysical (but deadly serious) claim that the island is somehow fundamentally and undeniably forever Greek and that, as a consequence, the Turks who have lived there for more than four hundred years are at worst interlopers and at best a minority deserving protection--but, in any case,

certainly not a people or nation worthy of being invested with the right of self-determination that the Greek Cypriots so vociferously claim for themselves. The Hellenes of Cyprus cannot alter their opinion on the status of the island and its Turkish inhabitants without thereby abandoning the fond dreams of once and future glory that have animated the Greek Orthodox community for the more than five centuries that have passed since the collapse of the Byzantine Empire and the fall of Constantinople to the Turks. So, the old electoral districts are still used, the maps remain unchanged, and the road signs still stand, now somewhat faded from their long ordeal in the relentless Mediterranean sun, but otherwise just as they were before the events that must be denied sanction. The Greek Cypriot refusal to adjust to the consequences of Turkey's military intervention on the island is an eloquent, if mute protest against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

II

Within the Greek sector of Nicosia, the green line is used in much the same fashion. Visitors to the city's Turkish quarter will come upon a series of unmarked and unremarkable concrete walls that bring the various streets of the old city to an abrupt end. The



only exception is the one visible guard post: next to it stands a large sign in Turkish advancing the claim that this land belongs to the Turks. The Greek Cypriots take a different approach to the buffer zone, patrolled by the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), that divides the island's capital into two different cities. They resort to camouflage. In some places, restaurants or other establishments put up displays to hide the street's dead end. Elsewhere, the wall or some structure in front of it is merely painted with the white and pastel blue stripes of the Greek flag.

In all of this, one fact deserves to be underlined: except on government buildings (and not always there), the flag of the Republic of Cyprus (irreverently described some years ago by one foreign journalist as "a fried egg surrounded by parsley") is nowhere to be seen. On the island of Cyprus, there are Greeks and there are Turks, but Cypriots there are none.

The Green Line

For this circumstance, the British bear considerable responsibility. In their days of empire, they might have decreed that education on the island should be conducted in accordance with the standards set in England, Scotland, Ireland, or Wales. Instead, they adopted the old Roman policy divide et impera and decided to allow each ethnic community virtual autonomy in the selection of teachers and the development of curricula. In practice, this meant that the Greeks looked to Athens and the Turks initially to Istanbul and, in due course, to Ankara for guidance. Though the island's Greeks and Turks lived side by side and rarely came to blows, each side imbibed the prejudices of their brethren from across the water. Only the English School in Nicosia and the American Academy in Larnaca could be counted as exceptions to the rule.

In the Turkish Cypriot case, Ankara's dictates did no great and lasting harm. Despite the Greek invasion of Anatolia in the aftermath of the First World War, the Turks of the republican era have not been obsessed with the Hellenic danger. To be sure, their schoolbooks are full of patriotic bombast. Naturally enough, they trumpet the virtues of the Turks, and they skirt the less creditable events in Ottoman and post-Ottoman history (where they do not ignore them altogether). These textbooks are indeed guilty of distortion, but they do not propagate a demonic view of anyone in particular--and they do little to advance irredentist claims.

Atatürk was born in Salonika, which is now called Thessalonica and lies in Greece. He might have been expected to evidence nostalgia for the region from which he hailed, but instead he did what he could to free his countrymen from the romantic longing for territory lost and soon to be regained that was so to bedevil the other successor states of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. In large part, he succeeded. The Turks have no intention of giving up an inch of the territory that they now possess, and they are therefore no more willing than their Iranian and Iraqi neighbors to countenance Kurdish nationalism. This poses certain difficulties for a country that professes to believe in national self-determination. The Turks deal with the problem in what is now a time-honored way: in their official pronouncements, they assert that the Kurdish tongue (an Indo-European language related to Persian) is a dialect of Turkish. Their ultimate aim, somewhat haphazardly pursued over the last half century, is the wholesale assimilation of this ancient people. In this regard, the Turks are not unlike the Greeks, who have done their best to Hellenize the Albanians, Vlachs, Macedonians, and Turks who live in their midst. The key difference is that Turkey remains a satisfied power, happy to be left in peace to digest what it has. In the 1970s, the Muslim fundamentalists in the National Salvation Party and the ultra-nationalists in the National Action Party espoused irredentism, but to this day no major party has unfurled the banner.

In Cyprus, Turkey's interests are mainly strategic. Greece dominates her Aegean coast, and she is hell-bent on preventing the same power from controlling her outlets to the Mediterranean. She would have been perfectly happy for the British to retain the island indefinitely; and, in the end, she was by no means unwilling for it to become an independent and predominantly Hellenic state--as long as its ultimate absorption by Greece was effectively ruled out and the Turkish minority was accorded a privileged political status enabling it to protect itself from being overwhelmed by the Greek majority.

The Greeks and many Greek Cypriots attribute to Turkey a grand plan for territorial expansion, but the facts do not bear out their claims. The Turks are, in fact, reluctant to assert themselves even when the Turkish minorities in nearby countries come under considerable pressure. They have been anything but zealous in their diplomatic assaults on Bulgaria for her reportedly bloody campaign to assimilate by force her Turkish minority; the Turkish authorities sometimes seem almost embarrassed at the prospect of coming to the defense of these Bulgarian Muslims.

Similarly, in 1964 and again in 1967, Turkey had excellent grounds for military intervention in Cyprus (her rights were spelled out quite explicitly in the Treaty of Guarantee negotiated in Zurich and London in 1959). But, on both occasions, she was persuaded to refrain; and, in recent years, she has pointedly refused to annex the 37% of the island that she seized in 1974 for the Turkish Cypriots. On a few occasions in the course of the last thirty years, the Turkish Cypriot leaders have called for unification with the republic forty miles to the North, but these arguments have always been advanced as a reaction to the concerted Greek campaign for unification (enosis) with Greece. Today, Greek Cypriot leaders tend to echo the words used by Archbishop Makarios in 1968: I was told by Archbishop Chrysostomos, by the socialist leader Vassos Lyssarides, by the communist trade union leader Andreas Ziartides, and by other lesser fry that enosis is "desirable but unfeasible." By contrast, the Turkish Cypriots consider annexation by Turkey feasible perhaps--but highly undesirable. In fresh paint on the walls of buildings in the Greek sector of Nicosia and in the countryside to the South of Famagusta, one still finds Enosis slogans: "Ellada-Kypros: Enōsē (Cyprus-Greece: Unification)." I have never seen a comparable sign in the Turkish North. When the Turks of Cyprus express the desire to live apart from the island's Greeks, they always allude to security and well-being and rarely if ever make any mention of national concerns.

In Greek Cypriot education, the influence of Athens was and, in many ways, still is of paramount political importance. The island's Hellenes were brought up on the Megali Idea ("the Great Idea"): they were taught to think of themselves as the heirs of both classical Greece and Byzantium, and they were instructed in the glories of the Greek War of Independence and the subsequent struggles of their brethren on the mainland against the uncivilized, rapacious, and barbaric Turks from the wilds of Asia. They were informed that their island had always been and must always be Hellenic, and they were told by the teachers sent from Athens that, if they were not degenerates but true Greeks worthy of their ancestry, they would earn their place by imitating the valor of their fellow Greeks from the mainland. Then and only then would they be worthy of being united in a single polity with their noble brethren from across the water. In September, 1964, when George Papandreou, then Prime Minister of Greece, spoke at the Officers' Club in Thessalonica and told the gathered multitude that "Enosis is coming, and with Cyprus as a stepping-stone Hellenism will continue its advance into the Middle East in the steps of Alexander the Great," the Greek Cypriots cheered.¹ As one genial old duffer

1. See C.M. Woodhouse, Karamanlis: The Restorer of Greek Democracy (Oxford 1982) 173. This particular statement is often brought to one's attention by Turkish Cypriots.

named Kyriakos Dimitriou put it to me on election day after buying me a soft drink at a cafe in Nicosia located just a few paces away from the green line, "If the truth be told, we were brought up on chauvinism and hatred."



Enosis Remains a Battle Cry

Kyriakos holds a British passport. Both of his daughters married British servicemen; one did so in the midst of George Grivas' terrorist campaign against the British in the late 1950s. Her home was at one point an object of terrorist assault, and she and her husband were for a time evacuated by the British from the island. In the course of our conversation, Kyriakos boasted of the Turkish friends he had made during the thirty-seven years he had served in the British army or worked on the British bases. He is, if anything, deficient in national feeling. And yet, not twenty minutes before he launched into his diatribe against the island's educational system under the British and since, Kyriakos had told me, pointing to the nearby barrier, "Here, we are

on the boundary between civilization and barbarism. Cross that line and you go back a thousand years."

Two days after the elections, this kind and generous individual took a day off from his retirement job and insisted on driving me out to Dekelia to meet one of the many Turkish friends he has who still work at the British base there; later, we motored on a bit farther to the windmill-studded coastline nearby so that I could take a gander at that charming corner of the island. Once we stopped in a village just short of the UNFICYP buffer zone to look down from high ground and see the high-rise apartments and hotels of Varosha, the chief suburb of the port-city Famagusta, shimmering in the distance: it was once, Kyriakos told me, the most prosperous Greek Cypriot community on the island; now it is a ghost town, closed to Turkish as well as to Greek Cypriots, held as a bargaining chip by the Turkish army.

Finally, over lunch, we returned to the questions we had discussed two days before; and, in the course of our conversation, my elderly friend defied me to prove to him that the Turks had ever had any culture at all. There was no point in argument--unless I wanted to fathom the depths of my benefactor's prejudice. Even among the handful of Greek Cypriots who are painfully aware of the corrupting effects of their own education, few seem able to free themselves from its effects.

III

I would not hesitate to say that the problem is rooted in religion--though by religion I mean something more comprehensive and fierce than what we usually have in mind when we use the word. Let me try to explain. In his youth, Winston Churchill encountered a phenomenon that he once dubbed "The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness." In describing its ethos, he observed, "There was general agreement that if you tried your best to live an honourable life and did your duty and were faithful to friends and not unkind to the weak and poor, it did not matter much what you believed or disbelieved. All would come out right." In the 1890s, some of his colleagues within the British army were prepared to go a bit further.

Some of the senior officers also dwelt upon the value of the Christian religion to women ("It helps to keep them straight"); and also generally to the lower orders ("Nothing can give them a good time here, but it makes them more contented to think they will get one hereafter"). Christianity, it appeared, had also a disciplinary value, especially when presented through the Church of England. It made people want to be respectable, to keep up appearances, and so saved lots of scandals. From this standpoint ceremonies and ritual ceased to be of importance. They were merely the same idea translated into different languages to suit different races and temperaments. Too much religion of any kind, however, was a bad thing. Among natives especially, fanaticism was highly dangerous and roused them to murder, mutiny or

rebellion. Such is, I think, a fair gauging of the climate of opinion in which I dwelt.²

If the views summarized by Churchill seem archaic, it is no doubt because they are so; many of our compatriots would quite understandably find them patronizing and highly offensive--but, with regard to the largely utilitarian attitude evidenced towards religion, Churchill's description could, I think, be taken as a reasonably accurate account of the climate of opinion within educated circles in the United States today. Those of us not simply hostile to religion altogether tend to subscribe to something akin to the religion of healthy-mindedness.

Many Greeks, Greek Cypriots, and a good many of the better educated Turks hold similar views, but on one critical point they take a different line. In the Levant, religion and nationality are inevitably intertwined. The Ottomans made no distinction between the two and treated the Chief Rabbi, the Armenian Patriarch, and the Orthodox Patriarch each as the Ethnarch of his respective nation (millet).³ To this day, that pattern persists--though not without complications. One can be a Christian and be a Turkish citizen; one can be a Muslim and be a citizen of Hellas; but one can never be a Turk if one is not in some sense or other a Muslim, and one can never be a Greek without being a Christian of Orthodox or Greek Catholic (i.e., Uniate) faith. Throughout the Levant, modern constitutional principles and ancient loyalties and practices live side by side--sometimes in considerable tension within one another.

In the Greek case, the tendency to equate sect and nation is particularly strong. Unlike Turkey, Hellas has a fully and unambiguously established religion: much of the Greek Constitution is dedicated to an elaboration of the rights and privileges of the Orthodox Church, and on Easter Sunday the President, Prime Minister, and Cabinet Ministers march solemnly into Constitution Square behind the Archbishop of Athens. Like Israel, Greece has a law of return: anyone born of Greek parentage and baptized and registered as such at a Greek Orthodox Church anywhere in the world can return to Hellas and take up citizenship at any time. If the Greek Catholics were more numerous and if Greece were somehow fundamentally at odds with the West, their allegiance to Rome would no doubt cause them to be suspected of treason.

Because their identity as Hellenes is rooted in religion, the Greeks are a nation whereas we, as Americans, are merely a people. In both cases, the unity of the political community rests on what Augustine called "loved things held in common." But in our case the loved things are the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and reaffirmed in the Gettysburg Address. In the Greek case, the loved things held in common are a religion of blood and sacred soil. In Hellas, even more fully than in Poland, Ireland,⁴,

2. Winston Churchill, My Early Life, 1874-1908: A Roving Commission (Glasgow 1959) 120-121.

3. The term ethnarch is derivative from the ancient Greek words for ruler (archon) and nation ethnos.

4. In this respect, Irish Protestants and Catholics are remarkably similar.

and Lebanon, Christianity is often less a universal religion than the embodiment of the aspirations of a particular ethnos. It is not fortuitous that the enosis struggle in Cyprus was lead from the outset by the island's Orthodox bishops. Nor should it be surprising that the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus spells out in considerable detail the rights and privileges of the Greek Orthodox Church. To the Hellenes of Cyprus, it made perfect sense for the first President of the new republic to be the island's Greek Orthodox Ethnarch--Makarios III, Archbishop of Nicosia. He was their leader--and, in a sense, he was divinely ordained.

Even today, the Greek Church exercises considerable political influence. Archbishop Chrysostomos is not now and will not ever be President of the Cypriot Republic, but he is the chosen and anointed successor of the revered Makarios, and he has inherited the prestige attached to his high office. He is no more a mere prelate than any of his predecessors were; and, in his sermons, he does not hesitate to address what Greek Cypriots call "the national question." No one would expect him to do otherwise; he is the embodiment of Hellenic consciousness on the island.

IV

And yet there is another side to the story. Virtually every Greek Cypriot speaks English; most speak it fluently. One Greek Cypriot in eight (including three of the four chief political leaders) is married to someone born abroad, and more often than not this someone is German, French, Italian, English, or American--and not in any way Greek. The Hellenic part of Cyprus is arguably the most cosmopolitan locale in the entire Mediterranean. As Henry Kamm, a New York Times foreign correspondent with long experience in the region, remarked to me one day in Nicosia over lunch, "When I fly here from Athens, I have the sensation that I am moving West not East."

Not surprisingly, then, anticlericalism is a force. At the urging of the party leaders, Archbishop Chrysostomos agreed to refrain from partisan intervention in the elections held on the 8th of December. One day, he broke that pledge and launched into a diatribe against the communist and conservative opponents of Greek Cypriot President Spyros Kyprianou. As it happens, Kyprianou was present in the Church; and the service was being broadcast by the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The CBC pulled the plug during the Archbishop's tirade. After the service, Kyprianou threatened to sack the individual responsible for stopping the broadcast, but--when it emerged that the director of the CBC had ordered the move--he did nothing at all. The spirit of the BBC is not entirely absent from Nicosia.

All of this makes me wonder what might have been. The day that Kyriakos drove me out to Dekelia, we made a stop for coffee while making our way back to Nicosia. We were then in the village of Pyla. That village, located within the confines of the UNFICYP buffer zone, is the sole mixed village to survive in Cyprus. There, under the loose supervision of 30 members of the Swedish Civil Police, about eight hundred Greeks live in relative amity without about half as many Turks. They drink at a pub called the Happiness Nest, and they

dine at a restaurant owned by a Greek named Petros Vasiliou. More often than not, they are served by his best friend, a Turk named Kemal Ömer.

When a Greek commits a crime against a Greek, the Swedes turn him over to the Greek Cypriot authorities to the South; when a Turk commits a crime against a Turk, they hand him over to the authorities of Rauf Denktaş' Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. When Greeks and Turks squabble, they call in a Turkish Cypriot and a Greek Cypriot policeman and try to arbitrate.

We stopped at the Turkish cafe in the main square. There, though gambling is forbidden both in the North and in the South, a group of Greeks were playing backgammon for money. No one was about to disturb them because no one has jurisdiction. The TRNC has no authority over Greeks, and the Republic of Cyprus cannot exercise its authority in a buffer-zone cafe owned by a Turk.

For different reasons, Pyla is a haven for smugglers. The TRNC is perfectly happy to let goods and produce through to the village, and Greek Cypriots drive in from Nicosia to buy things that are unavailable or much more expensive in the South. The Greek Cypriot police arrest those they catch with contraband but are either unwilling or unable to search every passing vehicle and stop the smuggling altogether.

On occasion, individuals reportedly slip from North to South and back in the same fashion. When I was in the TRNC last summer, a Turkish Cypriot journalist offered to smuggle me to Pyla in the boot of his car; from there, I could take public transportation to the Greek sector of Nicosia and then be perfectly free to tour the South--as long as I returned to the North in the same fashion and was caught out by neither side. Though tempted, I declined to test my luck.

Greek Cypriots make much of the fact that the two ethnic communities once lived side by side in Cyprus without serious friction, and they often cite Pyla as proof that this is still possible. They rarely mention that there was considerable trouble in Pyla during the decade prior to the Turkish intervention in 1974. To this day, the Turks in the village refuse to pay taxes and their bills for electricity, water, and garbage collection. One Associated Press writer visited the community not long after I passed through. To her, the Turkish owner of the village's principal grocery store explained Turkish Cypriot freeloading in the following way, "Before 1974, all of us Turks were harassed and intimidated by the Greeks; their young men had guns and stopped us at roadblocks. Then they took over our cooperative and took our savings. If the Turkish army was not on the hill above us, we would leave today. No, we don't pay taxes. We will when there's a settlement. Maybe my son will have to pay one day. Maybe his grandson will pay for electricity. Not me."⁵

If the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus got along from 1878 to 1955 and if the Greeks and Turks of Pyla have lived in relative harmony since August, 1974, it

5. Scheherezade Farmarzi, "Greeks, Turks live in harmony in Cypriot village," Turkish Daily News, 16 January 1986.

is because in both situations the two communities could look to an enlightened despot of the Hobbesian stamp for impartial rule. The Swedish Civil Police now perform the function once allotted to the British colonial authorities. It would be a gross exaggeration to say that Cyprus' Greeks and Turks mourn the demise of the British Empire, but I have heard the opinion voiced rather often both in the North and in the South.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Rahe

Received in Hanover 1/31/86