ICWA
LETTERS

Since 1925 the Institute of Current World Affairs (the Crane-Rogers Foundation) has provided long-term fellowships to enable outstanding young professionals to live outside the United States and write about international areas and issues. An exempt operating foundation endowed by the late Charles R. Crane, the Institute is also supported by contributions from like-minded individuals and foundations.

**TRUSTEES**
Bryn Barnard
Carole Beaulieu
Mary Lynne Bird
William F. Foote
Peter Geithner
Pramila Jayapal
Peter Bird Martin
Judith Mayer
Dorothy S. Patterson
Paul A. Rahe
Carol Rose
John Spencer
Edmund Sutton
Dirk J. Vandewalle
Sally Wriggins

**HONORARY TRUSTEES**
David Elliot
David Hapgood
Pat M. Holt
Edwin S. Munger
Richard H. Nolte
Albert Ravenholt
Phillips Talbot

**Institute of Current World Affairs**
THE CRANE-ROGERS FOUNDATION
4 West Wheelock Street
Hanover, NH 03755

**WM-10**
**EUROPE/RUSSIA**

*Whitney Mason is an Institute Fellow studying and writing about Turkey's role as nexus between East and West, and between traditional and secular Islam.*

# Divided Cyprus: No Exit?

**ISTANBUL, Turkey**
March, 2000

Dear Peter and other friends,

**"Some people say: 'There's no road to the mountain — and no mountain either.' I've heard that lie."**

This line from a poem by the 13th-Century sufi poet Jelaluddin Rumi often comes to mind when I hear nationalists talking about why it would never be possible for some ethnic or religious group to live peacefully with another. Cyprus might have the distinction of having been the subject of such silly talk for longer than anyplace else. From most anywhere outside the eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus probably looks like one of those impossibly tangled conflicts, its roots deep in history, that defy analysis by anyone without a Ph.D. Since Turkey invaded in 1974 to defend Turkish Cypriots from rampaging Greek nationalists, worthies from the four corners of the world have dutifully made their way to this divided island to beg the leaders of its antagonistic Greek and Turkish communities to overcome their differences and reunite. And for just as long the leaders of said communities have found reasons that this is impossible. The explanation, one could reasonably deduce from the coverage in the foreign press, must be those same "ancient ethnic hatreds" that have supposedly fueled recent wars between Turks [Muslim Slavs] and Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. An article in August 1999 issue of *Harper's* magazine painted just this sort of picture of unbridgeably deep hatreds. Scott Anderson and Sebastian Junger, the authors, concluded their report with the suggestion: "Perhaps what has passed as 'the Cyprus Problem' all these years has actually been the 'Cyprus Solution,' and perhaps the diplomats who periodically wring their hands over the ongoing stalemate on this island should actually be taking notes and trying to export it elsewhere. Maybe what most needs to end is all the chatter about exit strategies. Those in power must recognize that there is no exit from bad colonial history..."

Uh, maybe *not*. It's not just the coincidence of their vision for Cyprus and Jean Paul Sartre's famous play about hell (*No Exit*). It's not just being reluctant to actualize the lines from William Butler Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming': "The best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity." It's not because I grew up in a country [the United States] created by people who'd found an exit from bad colonial history by trading it for the clean slate of the "New World." Nor is it even being mindful of Walter Lippmann's foreboding before the Second World War, as he wrote in his 1955 *Essays in the Public Philosophy*, "that the nations of the Atlantic Community would not prove equal to the challenge, and that, if they failed, we should lose our great traditions of civility, the liberties Western man had won for himself after centuries of struggle and which were now threatened by the rising tide of barbarity." No, the reason for rejecting Anderson and Junger's prescription is that it reflects only the perspective of Turkish separatists, and so both analytically and morally it's just plain wrong.

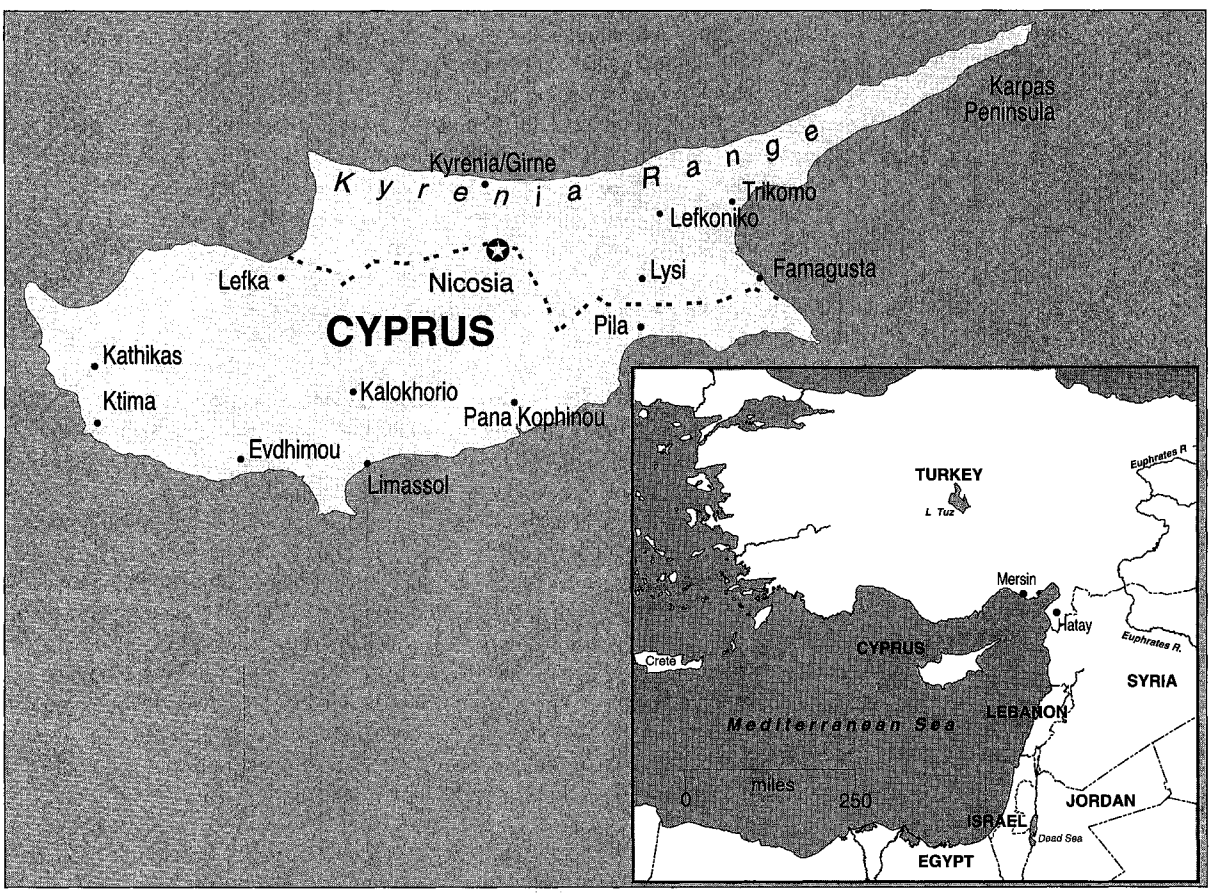
Come to Turkey, and "the problem," (as it's laconically known on and around the island) quickly begins to dissolve into something much more recent, superfi-

cial and altogether contingent than the blood-dimmed picture Anderson and Junger paint. Virtually every day, Turkey's news media repeat the axiom that Cyprus is inhabited by two separate and equal peoples. Any proposal for resolving the problem that is not premised on a recognition of this contentious fact — which in effect means any initiative recognizing the island's unity in the past or envisaging its unity in the future — is depicted as futile. Take a step closer to the fabled trouble spot itself by boarding an Istanbul Airlines flight, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus's façade of sovereignty falls away like so much waste being jettisoned into the night. For me the first step toward enlightenment came when I asked for a beer that I'd been thirsting for since beginning the mad rush to the airport two hours before. "I'm sorry," said the smiling flight attendant, "we only serve alcohol on international flights." But this is an international flight, I said, explaining that one of my reasons for the trip was to go to the Turkish embassy to submit an application that had to be submitted abroad. "But for us it's domestic," she answered with an apologetic shake of her dark hair.

***Cyprus lesson number one: Some states are more sovereign that others and the TRNC is far on the "less sovereign" side of the spectrum.***

Since unilaterally declaring its independence in 1983, the TRNC has been recognized only by Turkey. It shows. Three minutes after landing at Ercan International Airport, which is about as small as airports come, we step out of the TRNC's primary link to the outside world and are enveloped in darkness. A few stubble-faced men ask, with surprising gentleness, whether we will be needing a taxi. They don't have to be pushy because they know their decadent old Mercedes are the only transportation from the airport. As we drive past a couple of seedy-looking motels toward the sawtooth peaks of the Kyrenia range, the roomy German sedan passes a roundabout with signs to every habitation larger than a village and we head for the biggest town on the coast, known to Greeks and the rest of the world as Kyrenia and to Turks as Girne. On the way our driver talks about the horrors perpetrated by the Greeks before the Turkish "peace operation". Though he hadn't been a witness to the horrors himself, the driver says he would never sleep peacefully again if the island were reunited. Predictably, he loves Rauf Denktash, the TRNC president and inveterate champion of separatism.

It was January when Amanda and a friend from Sydney, Jeremy Gilling, and I arrived in Girne and made our way to the town's picture-postcard little harbor, in the shadow of a huge Crusader castle. While Denktash still bathed in the afterglow of inconclusive talks at the UN in New York, Northern Cyprus's premier tourist hub was empty of tourists and frequently darkened by blackouts that came around dinner-time and lasted a couple



of hours. This blacked-out little harbor is one of the primary profit centers of what Denktash and his supporters in Turkey insist is a state separate from but equal to the bustling Greek state occupying the southern two-thirds of the island. As we gazed at the dark water and listened to the gentle waves lapping against the ancient stones, I realized...

***Lesson Number Two: The TRNC must have the most world's most lopsided ratio of international attention to domestic dynamism.***

"Welcome to paradise!" the man who worked the night shift at our pension exclaimed with savage irony. Ramazan was a handsome, energetic 40-year-old. In most places, it seemed to me, he would be confidently cruising through the prime of his life; here on the beautiful island where he was born he seemed very close to going over the edge. Ramazan's frustrations with his state's diplomatically engineered cryogenesis showed in a wide-eyed, rather maniacal half-smile. When the lights went out, he'd immediately set out small candles on the stairs. "Candle in the wind," he'd say every time, referring to Elton John's treacley song about Marilyn Monroe and later Princess Diana. Because I listened to his complaints and talked with him in Turkish, Ramazan referred to me, with weird insistence, as his "best friend." Plain fatigue must have contributed to his frayed demeanor: to support his wife and two daughters, Ramazan held down two low-paying day jobs in addition to working at the pension. He was desperate to get out of Cyprus and pressed Jeremy for information on how to immigrate to Australia. When he was especially wound up after an evening sitting alone in the pension's darkened lobby, he'd greet us with an aggressive flick of his wrist, like a policemen waving traffic through an intersection, as if to say, "That's it, I'm out of here."

Ramazan told me that what frustrated him most was that as a Cypriot there was nothing he could do to ameliorate the diplomatic and economic isolation that had been strangling his country for 26 years. According to Ramazan and everyone else I talked with in the TRNC, all the power was in the hands of Turkey and the hard-line separatist parties supported mostly by mainland Turks. Ramazan himself supported the left-wing Republican Turkish Party or CTP, which favored accommodation with the South. According to Ramazan, virtually all native Turkish Cypriots support the CTP. Since one of my main questions was how much native Cypriots' attitudes differed from those of immigrants from mainland Turkey, I took Ramazan's suggestion and made an appointment to meet the CTP's president, Mehmet Ali Talat, and went to talk with reporters at the party's paper, *New Thought* [Yeni Duzen].

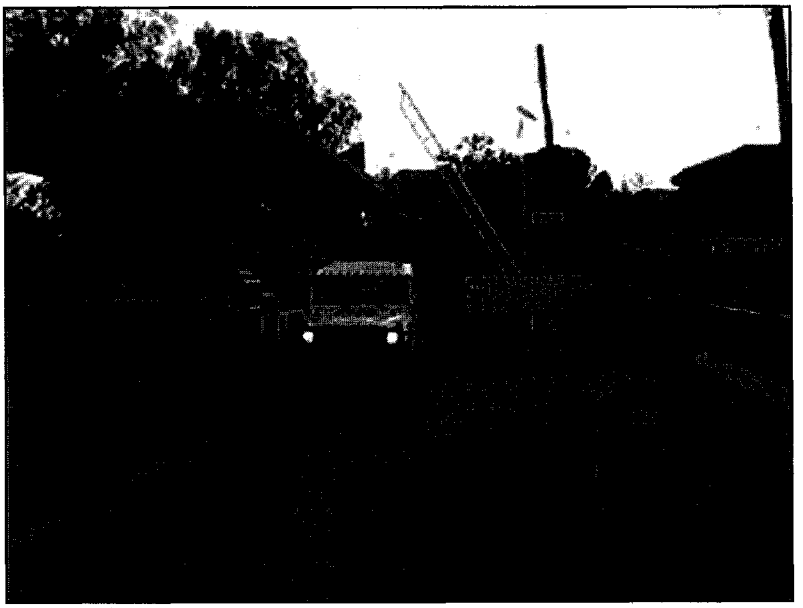
The next morning I caught a shared Mercedes taxi to Cyprus's divided capital of Nicosia [Lefkosha in Turkish] and spent an hour wandering around the ghostly streets near the Green Line that cuts through the heart of the city dividing the Greek and Turkish entities. Women in headscarves and grubby, smiling children sat in the doorways of once-elegant houses whose stonework and wrought-iron grills bespoke a distinctly un-Turkish provenance. At the end of one street I saw a church whose elegant lines were now obscured by neglect and riotous vegetation; my way to it was barred by a sentry next to a sign declaring the churchyard a military zone. The next street ended in a park from which I looked down into the dead strip of the Green Line itself, dotted by white watchtowers emblazoned with the letters "UN," and a busy intersection in the Greek part of the city traversed by expensive cars and elegantly dressed people.

I caught a minibus to the not-very-industrious industrial suburb where New Thought's offices occupied a single-story concrete building about the size and shape of a small-town insurance brokerage. Editor Burhan Eraslan was waiting for me outside in case I missed it behind the shrubs. Eraslan turned me over to reporter and assistant editor Sevgul Uludag. From the first moment, I sensed in Sevgul that same edge of volatile frustration I'd seen in Ramazan. With the same, spooky half-smile, Sevgul offered me some tea, lit a cigarette and drew her chair close to a gas heater. Though the sun was shining, the temperature outside wasn't far above zero. "This isn't Cyprus," she said with a shiver.

Perhaps because she grew up on a street that dead-ends on the UN-patrolled Green Line, Sevgul seemed to

*The TRNC's isolation leaves journalist and peace activist Sevgul Uludag feeling desperate for recognition.*

suffer with especial acuteness the slow strangulation of international isolation. The expulsion of the Greek inhabitants, said Sevgul, was only the first of many dramatic demographic changes in Northern Cyprus since Turkey's "Peace Operation." There are no exact figures, but estimates indicate that only 60 to 80,000 Turkish Cypriots live on the island, with another 100,000 in London, 25,000 in Australia and some 3,000 well-educated Turkish Cypriots in Istanbul and Ankara.



*The Green Line running through the heart of Nicosia was created by a British officer who bissected the city with a green pencil in an effort to stop Greek and Turkish Cypriot Turks from killing one another in 1963. Since the TRNC government banned bi-communcal meetings in 1997, it's been a no-go zone to everyone but the UN.*

The Cypriot emigrants have been replaced by an estimated 100,000 Turkish settlers. These fall into three categories: those who came immediately after 1974 and have made Cyprus their home; those who came more recently, mostly from the impoverished and traditional areas in Turkey's southeast; and those who come here for a short time just to make a quick buck. "If someone from this group happens to die here, his body is taken back to Turkey," Sevgul told me to illustrate how unconnected to Cyprus the temporary workers feel. Their economic motives are understandable: in Turkey the minimum wage is just 68 million lira a month, about $130, while in Northern Cyprus it's 115 million [$220]. As a taxi driver from the Hatay, the Turkish region carved out of Syria, told me, "I came here because in Turkey there's no work. This place isn't great, but at least it's alright."

In 1991 Northern Cyprus lifted passport controls for Turks, requiring only that they show their identity cards to enter the country. The illegal laborers have no social security; many sleep rough on construction sites. They can't organize themselves because Turkey and Northern Cyprus wrote a clause into the agreement eliminating passport requirements that specifically bans migrant workers from forming unions. The recent immigrants from Turkey have displaced those who came right after '74 by working for less money and no benefits, provoking street demonstrations two years ago by settlers from the first wave.

As the Republican Turkish Party had predicted at the time, allowing entry without a passport led to a dramatic rise in crime. In Turkey getting a passport is an elaborate process entailing a criminal background check, while everyone is required to have an ID card. Sevgul said the mainland immigrants have a completely different culture. Some came to rob and rape. "In Turkey there's more violence in the culture, while Cypriots — on both sides — are more peaceful, European and, after 500 years of cohabitation, more tolerant," said Sevgul. Until 1994, when crime statistics stopped indicating whether offenses were committed by native Cypriots or settlers, around 90 percent of crimes were committed by Turks from the mainland. "Cypriots used to leave their doors unlocked but now there's no personal safety," said Sevgul. "Illegal laborers walk around in big packs. Shopkeepers in Lefkosha now all shut before dark. We used to go a secluded beach on the Karpas Peninsula, but we don't go anymore because these Turkish workers stare at us and if we weren't in a big group, they'd attack us."

***Lesson Three: Much of the opposition to a federal solution comes not from Cypriots, but from mainland Turks imported to prop up Turkish influence.***

The overwhelmingly pro-separatist settlers have also changed the political balance. Traditionally Cypriots on both sides of the island have voted 30-35 percent for the left and 65-70 percent for the right. The spectrum jumped to the right in the 1993 polls when New Birth, a settlers' party, joined the Democratic Party started by Denktash's son Serdar. Some other settlers, meanwhile, joined Denktash's former party, the National Unity Party, now controlled by his equally hard-line rival Dervish Ergol, who is the prime minister. The center-left Communal Liberation Party [TKP] used to support the idea of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation and increased contacts with the south. Since 1983 they've become increasingly nationalist and the TKP's seven MPs are now in the governing coalition along with the Democratic Party (seven) and the right-wing National Union Party [UBP] with a dominant 24 members. The pro-accommodationist Republican Turkish Party polled 24 percent in 1993; in '98 they dropped to 14 percent, resulting in six MPs. On the far left — and in the political wilderness with no MPs — is

the Patriotic Unity Party of Alpay Durduran.

Out of this whole list I was most anxious to meet Durduran, hoping that not having a single MP would mean that he'd have nothing to lose by being candid. A taxi dropped me in front of his headquarters in a small apartment building in central Nicosia. The Turkish Cypriots' arch-gadfly, Durduran is a short man with a small paunch, gray hair and an irrepressibly playful expression on his tanned face. From 1975 to 1983 he had been president of the more mainstream TKP, leader of the opposition from '75 to '83, and a Member of Parliament until '89. In 1980 Durduran actually won elections in a coalition with two small parties, but Turkey intervened and pressured the leader of one of the parties to resign from parliament. "For four months Turkey didn't allow us to form a government, which was against the constitution, until finally they cracked the coalition," said Durduran.

"Everyone likes us, but nobody votes for us," said Durduran with a twinkle. "Our problem as Turkish Cypriots is we're always looking over our shoulders, wondering what Turkey will say." As we talked in a small room facing the street, I couldn't help but look over Durduran's shoulder at several chinks in the concrete that looked distinctly like bullet holes. Durduran explained that at four in the morning in 1993 the party's offices had been sprayed with gunfire. Though a policeman lived on the corner, he and everyone else on the street claimed to have heard nothing. The police inspector who investigated the incident said, "Look Mr. Durduran, this is the third attack on your office. I've taken up your time and you don't believe I'm going to be able to solve it and frankly, I don't either." Durduran believes the gunman came from Turkey and acted in collaboration with a member of the Turkish ultranationalist Grey Wolves from Girne. [The godfather of the far right in Turkey, Alparslan Turkesh, was born and raised in Cyprus — like many ultranationalists, including Hitler and Bosnian Serb tyro Radovan Karadzhic, on the fringe of the what he considered his nation.]

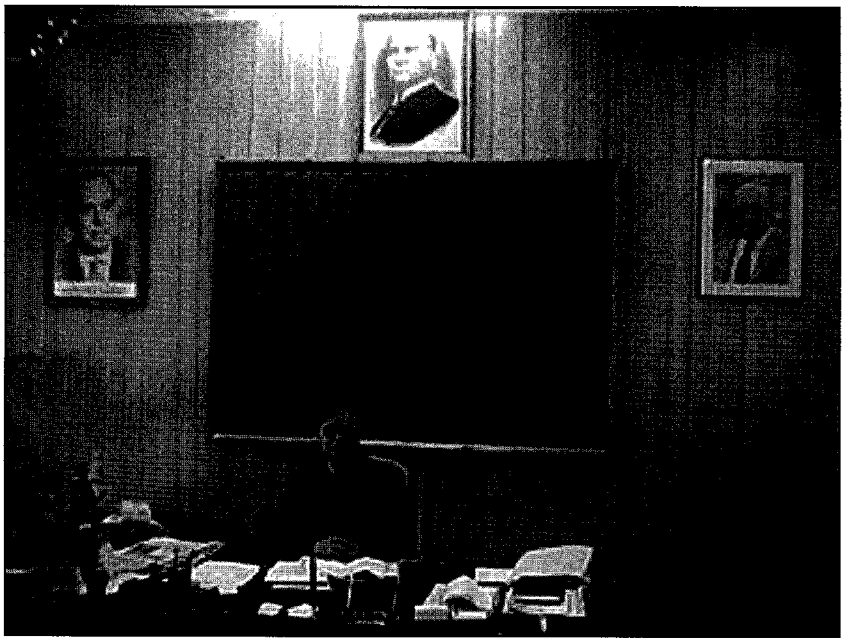
The attack hasn't made Durduran shy about criticizing Turkey. "Since '74 all our problems have come from our dependence on Turkey," he says succinctly. Everyone — except, it seems, Durduran — has an interest in not antagonizing Turkey. According to Durduran and others, the pro-Ankara forces manage to maintain power because they control all the carrots the economically straightened island has to offer — including the distribution of confiscated Greek property, civil service jobs and permits.

Durduran presents a persuasive case for his argument that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Turkey. After the Turkish intervention in 1974, says Durduran, all productive sectors collapsed. Agriculture isn't competitive because fertilizer and water are more expensive than in Turkey and wages are higher. On the other hand, Cyprus could do well in tourism, trade, small industries [dentures and buttons were well-established manufactures in the 40s] and certain crops including carrots, carob, olives and potatoes, which Durduran says are famous in Britain. Other industries that have been lost to Turkey and other countries include banking, telecoms, ports, tailoring with material imported from Britain. Says Durduran: "Now our only active economic sectors are universities, casinos, prostitutes and the Turkish army."

Northern Cyprus's five universities have earned a reputation as monuments of mediocrity, accepting some 45,000 students who are widely considered to have more money than brains. Northern Cyprus's low standards and preferential treatment is resented in mainland Turkey. A friend of mine who teaches violin in a state conservatory dreads her Cypriot students because they're substandard. Another friend who's a urologist says that while he had to score "60" on his exam to become a specialist, a Cypriot can get the same credential with a score of "40".


*North Cyprus's universities produce more money than scholars: for a fee, Girne American University issues a diploma from the notoriously cash-strapped University of the District of Columbia.*

As you would expect, this distortion has many pernicious consequences. "In this country there's a lack of confidence in the quality of medical care," Gusen Bozkurt, an apolitical doctor serving as the TRNC's Minister of Health and Environment, told me in her crowded but rundown office on the Kyrenia road. When a Turkish Cypriot has a condition that can't be treated on the island — or when he prevails on the administration to pay for care that he believes will be better abroad —



*Health and Environment Minister Gusen Bozkurt surrounded by a pantheon of the TRNC's leaders: on the left founder Fazil Kuchuk, on the right President Rauf Denktash and on top, guess who? Ataturk, founder of another state.*

a central bank, but its currency is merely a local version of the Turkish lira. Even the mail goes through Turkey. Every letter, every package addressed to someone in Northern Cyprus goes first to a warehouse in Mersin on the Turkish coast opposite the island. Durduran says Northern Cyprus could apply to the international postal commission to have mail sent directly to the island, but Turkey prefers getting a look at it first.

A Turkish intelligence officer manages North Cyprus's media, too. The Turkish army controls the North Cypriot army: the commanding officer of the both the TRNC army and police come from the Turkish General Staff in Ankara. In other words, it is *another* state — Turkey — not the government of Northern Cyprus, that has an effective monopoly on violence within the TRNC's borders.

the government pays all expenses for treatment in Turkey or the UK. In 1998, the TRNC paid an astounding 1.3 *billion* US dollars for treatment in the UK. Bozkurt is trying to reduce these astronomical payments, but she faces an uphill battle. "I'm here as a technical person and I'm trying not to give people everything they might like. But in a small country like ours it's not easy. Everybody can always talk to someone with influence in the government."

The biggest influence on the government is the Turkish embassy, unsubtley located directly across the street from parliament. Every industrial sector has its own "adviser" in the embassy. "Officially the advisers control only Turkish government aid; but since Northern Cyprus is broke, that means everything," says Durduran. Turkish aid, for example, built 18 dams for water storage. The attraction of dams is that they are easy to build and provide employment for laborers from Turkey. The down side is that Cyprus only had enough water to use two of them.

The electricity utility is owned by its mainland counterpart. Northern Cyprus has

As a good leftist, Durduran believes Turks themselves are as much victims of the Turkish state as Turkish Cypriots. An incident in 1997 reinforced his skepticism toward Ankara. "The Turkish ambassador at the time took me aside at a reception. He said Ankara was very serious about accepting a federal solution for problem and we declare this all the time but no one believes us.


*Gadfly under fire: Alpay Durduran believes it was an ultranationalist from the Turkish mainland who raked his office with machinegun fire in 1993.*

*The little harbor in Girne, Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, must be one of the world's most tranquil and picturesque war zones.*

'Now if you told people you believed us, others would too'."

"I told him I'd believe it when every person I met in Turkey — from the taxi driver to ministers — stopped telling me that Turkish and Greek Cypriots can never live together."

"We know Turkish public opinion is against reunification of the island," the ambassador said. "But in one month we can turn that around completely."

Such interactions with the Turkish state have convinced Durduran that "a solution to Cyprus will help Turks to integrate with the West and see their position more clearly."

Duruduran belongs to a dwindling generation that can remember living peacefully with Greek Cypriots. His father was an elementary school teacher and a *hoja* (prayer leader). He grew up in villages with a mix of Greeks and Turks and as a child was bilingual. Like many Muslims in Sarajevo before the war, Durduran's family would celebrate Christian holidays with their Greek neighbors. There was a lot of intermarriage, according to Durduran, especially between poor Greek girls and Turkish boys, because Greeks were required to pay huge dowries. The communities that had lived side by side under British rule began to polarize in 1955. With the support of the Orthodox church, EOKA, the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters, launched its campaign to prepare the island for union with Greece, known as *enosis* or "union," by setting off a series of bombs across the island. The British divided the educational system in the early 50s and the two school systems imported their textbooks from Greece and Turkey, respectively. "Even then," insisted Durduran, "we never hated each other like blacks and whites in South Africa or Jews and Arabs in Palestine."

While EOKA at first concentrated on attacking the British and terrorizing Greeks considered insufficiently zealous about *enosis*, the British recruited Turks for paramilitary police units and Turkey sent a colonel to organize them. The Turkish Defense Organization, [TMT], set up in 1958 to fight EOKA, killed two lawyers who headed the only Turkish Cypriot political party that opposed the National Party of Fazil Kuchuk.

In 1960 Britain granted Cyprus an independence that neither Turkish nor Greek Cypriots had wanted: Greeks wanted union with the motherland, *enosis*, and Turks wanted either union with Turkey, *taksim*, or a continuation of British rule. The constitution imposed on the fledgling republic granted 70 percent of seats in the 50-person parliament to Greeks and 30 percent to Turks — an advantage to the Turks, who comprised only 18 percent of the island's population. The constitution also mandated that the president should be Greek and the vice president Turkish and that 30 percent of all government jobs and 40 percent of all military billets should go to Turkish Cypriots. Greeks never honored the requirement to establish separate municipalities in the five biggest cities, while Turks obstructed legislation by the parliament. Said Durduran: "Both sides worked hard to create enmity."

In 1963 the president, Archbishop Makarios, presented Vice President Kuchuk with 13 proposed amendments that effectively ended the Turks' disproportionate representation in the civil service and power in the government. Kuchuk's refusal was followed by violent exchanges between the TMT and EOKA. Turks abandoned the civil service and army and began creating a separate structure within enclaves they controlled. In 1967 Greek army officers clandestinely supported by the US overthrew the democratically elected government of Greece and began plotting against Markarios, whom both Athens and Washington opposed as too independent and too far left.

UN mediator Galo Plaza said both sides were guilty of disrupting the state. While Turks called on the UN to send peacekeepers, Rauf Denktash said at the same time that he wasn't going to help normalize the situation but would use the time to further divide the communities. "Unfortunately nationalism came to Cyprus late," says Durduran. "While Makarios and Kucuk waited for the situation to calm down, they were paralyzed by the junta in Greece. The Turkish enclaves were opened and in 1968 15,000 Turks worked for Greeks." But despite such progress toward normalization of relations between the two communities, a political solution remained elusive. In the spring of 1974 Makarios had banned EOKA's successor, creatively named "EOKA-B"; the junta in Athens responded by ordering its minions in Cyprus to overthrow him and installing terrorist Nikos Sampson in his place. Though the archbishop escaped, Greek militants gunned down US ambassador Roger Davies. Turkish PM Bulent Ecevit called on Britain, as a guarantor power, to intervene. After Britain refused, Turkey launched an air and amphibious assault on the northern beaches of the island on July 20. Rauf Denktash, then Vice President of the Republic elected by Turkish Cypriots, said that day: "This is not a revolution. This is only a limited police operation carried out with the sole aim of restoring the independence, territorial integrity and security of the country. Victory will belong to all Cypriots who are for an independent Republic of Cyprus." Denktash's claim was quickly belied by the massive transfer of Turks to the north and Greeks to the south, resulting in *de facto* partition.

During the cold war, NATO showed little enthusiasm for settling the conflict, since left to their own devices the left-leaning Cypriots might have fallen into the Soviet orbit. With that menace gone, the US, UN and Europe have all lately shown intense interest in reunifying the island under some sort of federal structure. In 1997 the EU upped the ante by making the Greek Republic of Cyprus a candidate for EU membership. Ankara and Denktash were furious, insisting that it would be illegal for the south to join before Turkey. All that changed in December 1999 when the EU made Turkey a candidate for membership, with one stiff condition: According to Turkey's accession agreement with the EU, the Cyprus problem must be settled by 2004 or be referred to the European Court of Justice. Until the Helsinki summit in December, Durduran's party had been the only one emphatically in favor of Cyprus joining the EU under any conditions. The EU, Durduran believes, would guarantee the rule of law and prevent constitutional violations that polarized the Turkish and Greek communities under Makarios, and would stop Turkey "doing nasty things." Said Durduran: "As a melting pot, the EU would protect the rights of minorities — not just ethnic, but political as well."

After Turkey became a candidate last December, North Cyprus rhetoric about the EU made a 180-degree turn. "Two days before Helsinki, Former Foreign Minister Atay Rasit of Denktash's party was arguing against EU membership for the South," laughed Durduran. "Two days after Helsinki he said, 'All rights become wrong and all wrongs become right'."

"The EU decision has given us so much hope," said journalist/peace activist Uludag. "Two months ago the state was adamantly against peace. Now they're saying we have to be ready for it. Oh, we're going to be normal people, like Europeans. Can you imagine — you are living but no one knows it? We have a passport, a country, but the world is saying we have no identity, no state.

"The Greek Cypriots regard us as an invisible mass between Ankara and them," Sevgul said. "I wish they would consider us the enemy because at least then they would recognize us and deal with it. We don't get scholarships, aid, don't get visas to go any place. How can they overlook the needs of these people?" Sevgul demands with a wild flash of her eyes. "The EU isn't just money for us, it means human rights, it means living like other people."

***Lesson Four: There is an indigenous peace movement on both sides that the government of the TRNC does its best to thwart.***

From 1994 to 1997 people from the two sides met every Wednesday evening and on weekends at the Ledra Palace, the former presidential mansion that now houses UN headquarters in the no-man's-land of the Green Line. Sevgul raved about the training program in conflict resolution, which was funded by the US government and led by Benjamin Broome of the Communications Department of George Mason University. Others liked it too: from about 30 in 1991, by 1996 the number involved in the program had shot up to 3,000. [One of the volunteers trained in conflict resolution was an adviser to Denktash; at his boss's insistence, he quit.] The government panicked. After the Luxembourg Summit in December 1997 at which the EU refused to consider Turkey's candidacy, Denktash put the kibash on the bi-communal forums. Explained Sevgul: "Their whole premise is that the Greek Cypriots are awful people and Turkish Cypri-

ots could never live with them, so the government was frightened by how many people wanted to talk with them."

Since then peace activists have been forced to go to Oslo, London, and other neutral European cities to meet. Sevgul and other peace activists told me there are now about a thousand peace activists on each side of the border who correspond by e-mail. The activists are working on a number of projects to increase intercommunal understanding: looking at textbooks to identify common cultural factors, recipes, and features of women's lives, a camp in Vermont for teenagers from both sides, preparing a book of Greek and Turkish Cypriot poetry. The peaceniks also publish a remarkable magazine called *"Hade"* ["Let's go"], containing articles in Greek, Turkish and English. Despite these promising activities, Sevgul worries that separatist media are poisoning attitudes faster than the peace movement can possibly neutralize them. "The [Greek Cypriot] media that are translated into Turkish are all carefully selected. Sure, there's the internet, but how many people have that?"

I heard the same mix of determination and anxiety from Neriman Cahit, a middle-aged teacher-turned-journalist with short red hair and groovy glasses who's also active in the bi-communal movement. Neriman studied in a teachers' training college where Turks and Greeks were mixed for the first year until, under Greek pressure, the British colonial administration separated them. In 1959 she began teaching in a mixed village; four years later her home in the village where she was teaching in the south was looted. "I've paid so much to see peace on this island. It's been very hard, but I love this island," she told me as we walked through the eerily quiet streets near the broken heart of old Nicosia. Beginning in 1990 Neriman volunteered in another conflict-resolution program sponsored by the U.S. embassy. Representing a women's organization, she would travel to Pila, the one village on Cyprus where Greeks and Turks were allowed to meet, and have long discussions with her counterparts from the south. "We were there to try to help peace but it was very hard for both sides," said Neriman. "At first we were only blaming each other, cursing, crying. Gradually we learned to understand each other a little better. Everyone says they want peace, but these two communities need time to understand each other."

As we sipped tea on Ataturk Square, Neramin looked at a young woman walking by in a headscarf and shook her head sadly. "We are losing so much as Cypriots," she sighed, "being sandwiched between Greece and Turkey. Peace will be good for both sides, but especially for us.

"For a person like me peace would be easy, because I've had experience talking to Greek Cypriots," says Neramin. "But for many other people, who for years have heard nothing but negative things about people on the other side, it will take time."

***Lesson Five: Denktash is the problem, not the solution.***

That Denktash is not the ideal person to shepherd his flock toward a federation with the south is obvious from a cursory look at his resume. After studying law in London, Denktash kicked off his extra-judicial career by founding two terrorist organizations — Vokan in 1957, then the Turkish Defense Organization [TMT], modeled on the IRA. In 1963 he managed to get the Turkish ambassador recalled for condemning the TMT murder of the two lawyers who favored cooperation with Greek Cypriots. After returning from exile in Turkey, Denktash was the Turkish Cypriots' lead negotiator in sporadic talks before Turkey's invasion in 1974. Observers who know Denktash have told me that he sees himself first and foremost as a champion of the greater Turkic world.

One night in Girne, Amanda, Jeremy and I had dinner with Mehment Ali Talat, a former electrician who is now president of the main opposition and pro-federation Republican Turkish Party. Talat recounted a revealing exchange with Denktash. Before leaving for the first round of proximity talks in New York in January, Denktash called Talat into his office. "I'm 75 years old and know from a lifetime of experience that the Greek Cypriots will never allow Turkish Cypriots to live in peace. They will never abandon their aim of *enosis*. When you finally face this fact, come and put a flower on my grave."

Denktash's clout in Turkey creates a paradox for the peace process: If he's not involved, Turks won't see any solution as legitimate; if he is, he will do everything in his considerable power to thwart the process leading to unification of the island. Sevgul emphasizes that Denktash is not just a tool of Turkey: "Even if Turkey now pushes for a solution to the division of the island, he'll keep resisting." Presidential elections April 15 are hard to predict because the Turkish media have been waging a campaign against Dervish Ergol. Explains Sevgul: "If there's going to be an agreement, Ankara believes it has to be signed by Denktash in order to have legitimacy."

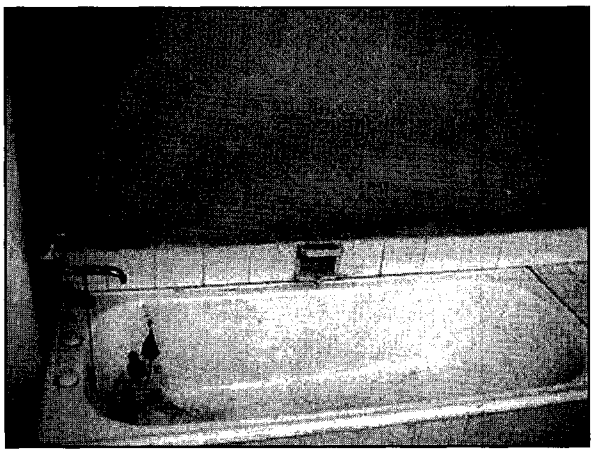
Preserving Denktash's legitimacy as a leader looms large in the sporadic negotiations about Cyprus's future. The leaders of the Turkish and Greek entities on Cyprus refuse to talk face-to-face, because Denktash insists on being addressed as "president," implying recognition of the TRNC, which the [Greek] Republic of Cyprus President Glafcos Clerides understandably refuses to do. Instead they hold "proximity talks" under UN auspices in which mediators carry messages back and forth as between feuding adolescents on a playground. The third round of proximity talks is due to begin May 23 and Denktash has claimed to be optimistic that Clerides will no longer oppose a "state-to-state" solution. But even on

the basis of expecting the Greek Cypriots to make this unprecedented concession to a reality imposed by Turkish arms, the old campaigner hastens to dampen expectations of progress toward a federation. "Let's assume 'that we have agreed with Clerides," said Denktash last April 29 on Northern Cyprus's state-owned Bayrak ["Flag"] TV. "There are very strong establishments among Clerides's people who oppose an agreement. Let's also assume we made reciprocal concessions, then where will this eventually go? To separate referenda. Any agreement can enter into force only after it is approved by both peoples of the island through separate referenda. What would happen if after eradicating all the obstacles, making concessions and reaching an agreement the Greek Cypriot people reject the agreement in the referendum and Clerides feels obliged to tender his resignation? My people cannot return to square one. Therefore, at such a stage, our policy will not be to go back from the point reached. Rather we will consolidate our republic, and push for recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. That will be our fundamental policy."

The state wastes no opportunity to remind residents of the TRNC of the terrors of the bad old days when Greeks and Turks lived in a single state. The most impressive monument must be the Museum of Barbarism, housed in a white, one-story house surrounded by an overgrown yard a stone's throw from parliament in Nicosia. In 1963, when inter-communal fighting first became intense, the house belonged to an army doctor, Major Nihat Ilhan. The doctor wasn't home when EOKA gunmen burst in and found his wife and three young sons huddled in the bathtub. The highlight of the museum, as Scott Anderson described it in *Harper's*, is the


*This poster at a bus stop in Nicosia seems to protest too much. And why is half of it in English?*

*The Museum of Barbarism: Exhibit one is Denktash's case for why Turkish and Greek Cypriots can never again live together.*



*Monument to Barbarism: The bathtub where a Turkish Cypriot woman and her three sons were murdered by EOKA militants in 1963.*

*Maj. Nihat and Muruvet Ilhan's three sons were clinging to their mother when the gunmen came in. Separatists imply this massacre is typical Greek Cypriot behavior.*

bathroom where the woman and children were machine-gunned to death, complete with bathroom things, bloodstains and bits of brain tissue that supposedly have lain undisturbed since that night 37 years ago. When we arrived it was closed for restoration but when I explained to the amiable caretaker that we'd come all the way from Istanbul to see this bathroom, he graciously allowed us in. The only signs of the murders visible during the restoration were a few bullet holes in the tub itself and a couple of very slightly discolored patches of wall that may indeed have been blood: if future visitors are going to have a chance to marvel at the spattered brains of children amid the familiarity of bottles of soap, the bottles and bits of tissue will have to be put back by the restor-

ers. And unless the political environment changes dramatically, it seems certain that they will be.

***Lesson Six: History/Reality = (manufactured) "facts on the ground" + time.***

Like nationalists elsewhere, Denktash manipulates history in two ways. The first, evident in the Museum of Barbarism, is to take a selected bit of "found history" to make the case that after the horrors perpetrated by Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots would never be safe living with them again. For those skeptical of the history of Turks' victimization, Denktash appeals to a realpolitik recognition of the history that he and his Turkish backers have created. Since Turks and Greeks have now been living in separate entities for 26 years, Denktash argues, this separateness has to be accepted as the only relevant reality of Cyprus.

A politically savvy Greek-American friend recently cited Cyprus as further proof of the sad fact that only armed force can change borders or regimes. I disagree. This apparent law of nature confuses the consequence of a series of political mistakes for the inevitable outcome of an ineluctable process. In fact, the possibility that armed aggressors will prevail becomes fact only in the absence of effective countervailing pressure; and the longer the aggressors hold the territory they sought, the more force is required to dislodge them. In the world of actual diplomacy intractable conflicts result mostly from what Warren Zimmerman, the last US ambassador in united Yugoslavia, calls "the paradox of prevention: it's rarely possible to win support for preventive action at a time when the circumstances that unambiguously justify such action have not yet arrived." In the absence of effective prevention, determined aggressors like the Greek Cypriot nationalists in the 60s and early 70s and the Turkish army in 1974 can create new facts on the ground. If there's still no countervailing pressure, those facts will eventually come to appear pre-ordained and unchangeable except by resort to some extraordinary force.

***Lesson Seven: Time is on the side of the separatists.***

On the other hand, it is true that by the measure of human lives, 26 years is a long time: after such a period of smothering isolation, Turkish Cypriots tell me that for them time is running out. "The Greeks don't see any urgency in solving the problem," said Sevgul. "They don't realize that we'll soon be extinct and they'll have no one to talk with."

# Index



*Entries refer to ICWA Letter (WM-1, etc.) and page, with Letter number given before each page entry.*

*Entries refer to ICWA Letter (WM-1, etc.) and page, with Letter number given before each page entry.*

*Entries refer to ICWA Letter (WM-1, etc.) and page, with Letter number given before each page entry.*

Author: Mason, Whitney
Title: ICWA Letters-Europe/Russia
ISSN: 1083-4273
Imprint: Institute of Current World Affairs, Hanover, NH
Material Type: Serial
Language: English
Frequency: Monthly
Other Regions: Sub-Saharan Africa; East Asia; South Asia, Mideast/North; Africa; The Americas

**ICWA Letters (ISSN 1083-4273)** are published by the Institute of Current World Affairs Inc., a 501(c)(3) exempt operating foundation incorporated in New York State with offices located at 4 West Wheelock Street, Hanover, NH 03755. The letters are provided free of charge to members of ICWA and are available to libraries and professional researchers by subscription.

Phone: (603) 643-5548 E-Mail: ICWA@valley.net
Fax: (603) 643-9599 Web Site: www.icwa.org

Executive Director: Peter Bird Martin
Program Administrator: Gary L. Hansen
Publications Manager: Ellen Kozak

©2000 Institute of Current World Affairs, The Crane-Rogers Foundation. The information contained in this publication may not be reproduced without the writer's permission.

Institute Fellows are chosen on the basis of character, previous experience and promise. They are young professionals funded to spend a minimum of two years carrying out self-designed programs of study and writing outside the United States. The Fellows are required to report their findings and experiences from the field once a month. They can write on any subject, as formally or informally as they wish. The result is a unique form of reporting, analysis and periodic assessment of international events and issues.

**Institute of Current World Affairs**
THE CRANE-ROGERS FOUNDATION
Four West Wheelock Street
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755 USA