Κάμπος

Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek

Cambridge No. 4 1996

© Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages
University of Cambridge 1996
ISSN: 1356-5109

Published by:
The Modern Greek Section
Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge CB3 9DA
United Kingdom

Price per issue: £7.00
All correspondence should be sent to the above address.

Edited by David Holton, Shannan Peckham and Jocelyn Pye
Layout by Liz Crossfield

Cover illustration: from the *Grammar* of Gregorios Sarafis, published at Kydonies (Ayvalik) in 1820 (see A. Koumarianou, L. Droulia & E. Layton, *Το Ελληνικό Βιβλίο 1476-1830.* Athens 1986, Plate 239)

Κάμπος. **Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek No. 4 1996**

Contents

"Pawns that never became queens": the Dodecanese Islands, 1912-1924

Philip Carabott

The Dodecanese Islands are located in the Aegean Sea, off the south-east coast of Turkey.[1] Contrary to their name, which is derived from the Greek δώδεκα νησιά (twelve islands), the Archipelago consists of thirteen islands and their adjacent islets: Astypalæa (Stampalia), Chalki, Kalymnos, Karpathos (Scarpanto), Kasos, Kastellorizo, Kos, Leros, Nisyros, Patmos, Rhodes, Symi and Tilos (Episkopi).[2] The appellation "Dodecanese" is merely a political expression by which, in 1908, the islands became known in conjunction with their resistance to Ottoman encroachments.[3] Despite the fact that, apart from Kos and Rhodes, the Dodecanese are quite barren of natural resources and consequently of negligible economic importance, they became early in their history a bone of contention between various powers. Due to their location, they were of immense strategic value, since the power which possessed them could, it was argued, command wide control over the naval routes to the Dardanelles in the north, the Aegean Sea in the west and

---

[1] The islands are also known as the Southern Sporades and the Archipelago. Hereafter, the appellations "Dodecanese" and "Archipelago" will be used interchangeably.

[2] Although Kastellorizo geographically and, nowadays, administratively forms part of the Archipelago, its history falls outside the purview of this essay. Due to the island's proximity to the Anatolian coast opposite and its distance from the rest of the Dodecanese, Kastellorizo enjoyed virtual autonomy in as much as neither the Knights of St John nor the Ottomans considered its permanent administration necessary. For her part, Italy followed much the same attitude and it was only after the end of the Great War, and largely on account of the island's occupation by the French in December 1915 (primarily for strategic reasons), that Rome claimed Kastellorizo as forming an indispensable part of the Dodecanese. For a detailed, albeit non-scholarly, exposition see Vardamidis 1948.

[3] Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division 1943: 4.

southwards as far as Cyprus and Egypt. It was this strategic reality, or rather perception, that in the wake of the demise of the Byzantine Empire led to the occupation of the islands, first by the Knights of St John in the early fourteenth century and two centuries later by the troops of Suleiman the Magnificent.

The Ottoman occupation marked a turning point in the history of these ethnically-Greek islands. As in many other areas of the Ottoman Empire, it was not only impossible but even undesirable for the Sublime Porte to apply a centralized system of administration at a time when the empire stretched across three continents and was engaged in constant warfare. Hence newly occupied areas, especially when they offered few opportunities for economic exploitation, although nominally under the Sultan's sovereignty, were accorded virtual autonomy – with the proviso that their inhabitants remain faithful to the Porte. Suleiman the Magnificent was the first to bestow certain administrative and religious privileges upon those of the islands which had surrendered willingly to his power, by issuing a *firman* (imperial decree) to that effect c. 1540.[4] It is in this connection that the Dodecanese, apart from Kos and Rhodes which had unsuccessfully resisted the Ottoman onslaught, came to be known as the Privileged Islands. Subsequently, they were to enjoy civil liberties and a level of religious tolerance unknown under previous occupiers and appreciably more lenient than what applied to other areas of the Greek world which were subjugated to Christian rulers (for example, the Ionian Islands and, up to 1669, Crete).

The virtual autonomy accorded to the Dodecanesians gave them the opportunity to establish an administrative system which a German archaeologist who visited the Archipelago around 1840 described as a replica of the system that existed in

---

[4] Volonakis 1922b: 2-3; Volonakis 1922a: 294-7; Speronis 1955: 5-6. There seems to be disagreement as to the exact date of Suleiman's decree as no copy has survived. However, subsequent imperial decrees regarding the Archipelago point to the fourth decade of the sixteenth century. The Booths (1928: 30, 195-6) argue that Symi was the first island to be accorded certain privileges in 1522, although no evidence is offered. On that assumption it would be safe to maintain that the privileges accorded to Symi were extended to the rest of the islands by 1540.

classical Athens.[5] Each island was governed by a council of elders (Δημογεροντία) whose twelve members were elected annually by a general assembly of the island's male population.[6] As the representative bodies of the local communities (κοινότητες), the *Dimogeronties* and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Archipelago solidified the linguistic, cultural and religious bonds of their members, who gradually came to share common attributes and experiences. In turn these features imprinted upon the islanders a sense of a (Greek) ethnic identity. The cultivation of ethnic consciousness in the context of Anderson's definition of the "mental" construction of nations as "imagined communities"[7] was to pave the way for the Dodecanesians' incorporation into the schema of Greek nationalism and irredentism.

Up to the second half of the eighteenth century the Dodecanese hardly appear in post-classical history. The might of the Ottomans and the fact that there was no great cause for friction in the islands had diminished the probability of any great power interference – despite the fact that the strategic location of the islands might have acted as an incentive for intervention. However, the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire, the intense efforts of the powers – particularly Russia – to gain from the Sultan's waning authority over his subjects, and the concurrent appeal of nationalism, encapsulated in the establishment of an independent Greek state, combined to upset, albeit only in times of crisis, the status of the Archipelago. Thus, from the 1770s until the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, the question of the islands constituted an integral, although peripheral, parameter of the Eastern Question. In this connection a precedent was established whereby the islands were to be seen and indeed used as an object of barter in the diplomatic struggle amongst the apparent heirs of the "sick man of Europe".

By the late 1820s the Privileged Islands were administered as a *de facto* district (επαρχία) of the Greek state and officials

---

[5] Cited in Agapitidis 1967: 14.

[6] Booth 1928: 207-11; Agapitidis 1967: 13; Volonakis 1922b: 4.

[7] See Anderson 1991 and Kitromilides 1990: 23. For the features and function of similar local bodies elsewhere in Ottoman Greece and Asia Minor, see Kondoyioryis 1982 and Augustinos 1992: 33-54.

were appointed by the government of Ioannis Kapodistrias.[8] Yet the Protocol of London (3 February 1830), by which the independence of Greece was proclaimed, made no reference to the Archipelago. The Great Powers were determined to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and to prevent the creation of a large and powerful Greece which might prejudice their own conflicting interests in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean. Thus, nine years after the islanders had hoisted the flag of liberation and after they had gone through many upheavals and experienced grave calamities, their status had not changed. Yet in many ways the Dodecanesians' participation (and its outcome) in the Greek War of Independence should be considered a landmark in the history of the islands. Firstly, it made the islanders identify themselves with the Greek nation. Greek statehood and political territoriality, encapsulated in the quest for sovereign independence, offered the islanders an alternative to other foci of group attachment (*koinotites*, dynastic empires, religious formations, etc.). Secondly, it provided them with a feeling of security, if only emotional, and a sense of distinct national belonging. However, it also brought home the limited role that the Greek state could (and would) play in their eventual "redemption". To the extent that the latter rested primarily, though not exclusively, upon the attitude of the Great Powers *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman Empire and Greece, the fact that the Dodecanese did not figure prominently in the irredentist agenda of the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea) should not come as a big surprise. Barren of natural resources and scarcely populated, the Archipelago could not attract the attention either of Kapodistrias or of his successors. But even after Greece gradually embarked upon the successful realization of her irredentist aspirations, Athenian politicians and activists continued to consider the Dodecanese of secondary importance, especially as the islands' "Hellenic" character was not under threat nor was the Archipelago coveted by "great ideas" inimical to Greece's interests (as was the case with Macedonia and Thrace). When eventually, in the second decade of the twentieth century, it transpired that Italy's presence in the

---

[8] Tsakalakis n.d.: 13; Booth 1928: 217; Finlay 1877: VI.2, 165; Volonakis 1922a: 309-10.

Dodecanese would alter the premises upon which Greek policy had been based, the legacy of nineteenth-century statesmen was so strong that even a politician of the status of Venizelos found it difficult to overcome.

On a different level, the islanders' siding with their compatriots in mainland Greece significantly altered their position *vis-à-vis* the Sultan. The Porte came to perceive the Dodecanesians as its enemies, as rebels and villains conspiring against their nominal sovereign. Their constant endeavours to associate themselves with the rest of the Greek world were met with strenuous attempts on the part of the Ottomans to curtail the islanders' privileges. To these outbursts of oppression and violence, which were particularly acute in times of crisis, the islanders responded with the tried and tested method of foreign protection. Nevertheless, the pressure brought upon the Porte by the Great Powers to respect the privileges of the islands was not followed up by steps which would guarantee that the Ottomans would keep their promises. The admission of the Porte into the Concert of Europe in the aftermath of the Treaty of Paris (March 1856) had committed the Great Powers to guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.[9] And although this undertaking was not scrupulously observed, it did adversely influence the extent, as well as the nature, of great power intervention in regard to peripheral issues such as the Dodecanese question. Consequently, when in the spring of 1912 Italian forces occupied the islands after a brief show of resistance, most of the Archipelago's privileges had already been abolished – if not officially, at least in day to day practice.[10]

The Italian occupation of the Dodecanese arose out of Rome's need to bring to a victorious end the Italo-Turkish War over Libya which had begun in late September 1911. Characterized as one of the least justified wars in European history,[11] it also represented a conspicuous, albeit belated, attempt by the weakest of the Great Powers to expand and fulfil its colonial ambitions. As such it was bound to upset the delicate balance of

---

[9] Anderson 1983: 141-4.

[10] Stéphanopoli 1912: 44; Tsakalakis n.d.: 23. For a detailed account of the first months of the Italian occupation, see Carabott 1993.

[11] Anderson 1983: 288.

power amongst the Great Powers. Yet, the response of the latter to Rome's designs was rather mild and, by and large, of a defensive nature. Italy's allies, Austria-Hungary and Germany, passively watched as she established herself more permanently in the Dodecanese, afraid that if they intervened the war might spread over to the Balkans. Likewise, for the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia) it was essential that no wedge should be driven into the European Concert and that nothing should be done "to press Italy away from us towards the other Powers".[12] This particular perception was so pivotal that it overrode the potential threat posed to Britain, the supreme naval power, by Italy's presence in the Archipelago. The most London was willing to do was to caution the Italians. The message was clear enough: any alteration in the status quo of the eastern Mediterranean would be inimical to British (and French) interests.[13] But it did not amount to anything more than a gentle hint which carried no special weight. It was not meant to deter Rome by means of "gunboat" diplomacy, but rather to act as a bargaining counter for London's *reconnaissance* of the Italian annexation of Libya.[14] In the event, the British trump card evaporated into thin air.

Naturally, the Greek government exhibited a strong interest in the ultimate fate of these ethnically-Greek islands. On the one hand, Venizelos was at pains to demonstrate that Greece had no ulterior motives and that her only concern was the well-being of the islanders. As was the case with their Turkish counterparts, politicians in Athens entertained the belief that Italy would not be allowed to stay indefinitely in the Archipelago, since such an eventuality would be in direct opposition to the conflicting interests of the other powers. On the other hand, the Greek government did not fail, clandestinely of course, to guide and support the Dodecanesians in demanding union with their mother country.[15] This two-faced policy was largely necessitated by Greece's weak international standing and by the

---

[12] Public Record Office, London, Foreign Office Papers, FO 371/1536/43275: Grey to Bertie (11 October 1912). Cf. Hayne 1987: 332-4.
[13] Ibid., /35667: Bertie to Grey (23 August 1912).
[14] Ibid., /43275: Grey to Bertie (11 October 1912)
[15] See Carabott 1993: 297-302.

fact that the Dodecanese had never been placed high enough on the country's irredentist agenda.

If Athens's policy was two-faced, that of Rome was ambiguous, ambivalent and, to paraphrase A.J.P. Taylor's comment on Italian diplomacy prior to 1914, by and large dishonest.[16] Although the Italian objective in occupying the Archipelago had been to use the islands as a lever for the complete evacuation of Libya by Turkey, the attitude of Italian diplomats and the measures taken by the authorities in the Archipelago clearly indicated that Rome was slowly, if somewhat hesitantly, drifting towards proving the old proverb "possession is nine-tenths of the law".[17] Heralded as "the first act of Italian imperialism in the Levant",[18] the occupation of the Dodecanese was to be used as a bargaining card, as a pawn for extracting concessions. Numerous disclaimers on her part could hardly disguise the fact that Italy would not evacuate the islands unless she got something in return.[19] Indeed, this particular motivation guided and characterized Rome's policy on the question of the islands from 1912 onwards.

The Treaty of Lausanne in October 1912, which granted Rome sovereignty over Libya, provided that Italy would relinquish the Dodecanese immediately after Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were evacuated by the Turks.[20] In addition, the Porte undertook to introduce a series of widespread administrative reforms in the islands, "without distinction of cult or religion". Thus the Archipelago was restored to its status *ante bellum*. However, it was widely believed that the Porte had struck a secret agreement with Rome whereby Italy would "only evacuate the islands when asked by Turkey to do so, thus preventing their

---

16 Cited in Bosworth 1979: 299.

17 Ibid., 305.

18 Seton-Watson 1967: 377.

19 A British diplomat noted in his memoirs that such disclaimers "were becoming almost as numerous as those of British statesmen thirty years earlier regarding the occupation of Egypt", adding, somewhat self-consciously, that they "were no doubt made in equally good faith"; see Rodd 1925: III, 176.

20 Text of treaty in FO 371/1526/52253/52253 and Childs 1990: 250-3.

occupation by the Greeks".[21] On the other hand, Italy, on the pretext of waiting for the evacuation of Libya by the Ottomans, hoped to remain indefinitely on the islands. As the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs characteristically noted, to make Rome's withdrawal "dependent upon the fulfilment of a treaty by Turkey", a country which had "never fulfilled a treaty entirely, though it was not equivalent to a freehold, might almost be regarded as equivalent to a 999 years lease".[22]

In theory, the Treaty of Lausanne sought to ensure that henceforth the question of the Archipelago would constitute a bilateral issue between Rome and the Porte, to be solved after the Turks had evacuated Libya. Yet the events that were unfolding just as the treaty was being concluded made such a postulation highly improbable. The spectacular territorial gains that the Balkan allies secured in the course of the First Balkan War signalled the beginning of the end for the "sick man of Europe". Facing political instability at home, and with minimal Great Power support, the Porte was forced to relinquish most of its European possessions, including the strategically situated northern Aegean islands, to the victorious allies. In turn, Athens's *de facto* hold over these ethnically-Greek islands inevitably complicated the issue of the ultimate disposition of the Dodecanese. The Greek character of the Archipelago had never been seriously disputed, and now that the status quo in the region was being dramatically altered Greece expected the Dodecanese to be handed over to her outright. For its part the Italian government, while officially determined to hold the islands as a warranty until Turkey had fulfilled her treaty obligations, continued to harbour hopes of using the Dodecanese as a bargaining card for the attainment of other foreign policy objectives, particularly with regard to Albania and Asia Minor.[23] Thus, the question of the Archipelago ceased being solely a matter of Italo-Turkish relations. Instead, it became an issue inextricably wedded to Greek irredentism, Italian expansionism and the perennial Eastern Question.

---

[21] FO 371/1526/43550: Lowther to Grey (16 October 1912); FO 371/1536/47250: Minute by Vansittart (8 November 1912).
[22] Grey 1925: I, 271.
[23] Giolitti 1923: 370; Bosworth 1970: 691-2.

This new reality was clearly demonstrated in the course of the Conference of Ambassadors that was held in London from December 1912 to August 1913. The Conference sought to preserve peace among the Great Powers and deal with the territorial complications that had arisen as a result of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. The Entente powers proposed that the Dodecanese should be handed over to Greece, provided she relinquished her claims on southern Albania (northern Epirus). Austria-Hungary and Germany vetoed this suggestion on the grounds that the question of the Archipelago's disposition should not be discussed in connection with the delimitation of Albania's frontiers, as it was linked to the Treaty of Lausanne.[24] Naturally, Rome adopted a similar position and in fact objected "to every possible mode of approaching a discussion" on the issue.[25] Highly irritated, but unwilling to force the issue further, Britain and France concurred in accepting Italy's pledge to fulfil her obligations from the Treaty of Lausanne, before deciding on the ultimate fate of the islands. But Rome was not content simply to accept this ruling, and sought ways of using the Dodecanese to maximum diplomatic, political and economic advantage. Eventually, in late 1913-early 1914, Italian intentions became crystal-clear. With Turkey unwilling to accept the restoration of the Dodecanese, until she had "sufficiently advanced her naval preparations" to deal with the Greek threat, Italy would evacuate the islands under two conditions: firstly, she should receive economic and commercial concessions in Asia Minor, similar to those enjoyed by Britain and Germany; secondly, she should be compensated for the expenses she had incurred in the administration of the islands, as the occupation cost £3,000 a day.[26] The die had been cast.

The Entente powers were scandalized by the new Italian proposals. London informed Rome that "it will not do to connect schemes of Italian expansion" in Asia Minor with the question of

---

[24] Fabo-Macris 1981: 72-3.

[25] FO 371/1764/2913: Rodd to Grey (15 January 1913).

[26] FO 371/1844/56128: Rodd to Grey (13 December 1913); FO 371/2112/2179: Rodd to Grey (11 January 1914).

the evacuation of the Dodecanese.[27] Privately, the British were far more virulent in their condemnation:

> After all this shuffling in the matter of [the] evacuation and restoration of the islands, one thing stands out quite clear: that the words and professions of Italian governments are not to be trusted.[28]

In a moment of grandiloquent desperation, the French proposed to go to war to get the Italians out of the Dodecanese.[29] Yet, with Italy enjoying the tacit support of her allies in the Triple Alliance, such threats carried little weight. After all, no power would seriously jeopardize the fragile status quo for the sake of a few barren islands. In a world of *realpolitik* to do so would be tantamount to committing suicide.

Thus, on the eve of the Great War, Rome's diplomacy had triumphed at minimal cost. Italy was allowed to remain in the Dodecanese, despite the fact that none of the powers, not even her nominal allies, looked favourably upon her presence in the eastern Mediterranean. However, their attempts to compel her to withdraw were feeble and limited to verbal warnings. Such attempts as were made lacked coordination and cohesion. The division of Europe into two power blocks prohibited collective action, and Italy's political and strategic importance enabled her to play one power against the other. In the event, Italy emerged from this chess match in possession of the Dodecanese, and having acted as a great power whose economic ventures in Anatolia had to be acknowledged. Despite the fact that Italian credibility had been ruined, it was, considering the odds, a formidable accomplishment.

Meanwhile, in the Dodecanese, the authorities had embarked resolutely on a policy of demonstrating to the islanders the iron fist of their rule because, as the Italian governor put it, "the Greeks obey only under the rule of fear; those who believe

---

[27] Bosworth 1970: 699. Yet, in October 1913, Grey had minuted that "we need not oppose anything in Asia Minor that does not conflict with the rights of the [British] Smyrna-Aidin Rly. Co."; cited in Hayne 1987: 347.
[28] Cited in Bosworth 1979: 324.
[29] Stieve n.d.: 161.

otherwise have only had a brief experience of living amongst them."[30] To this effect, a series of illiberal religious and administrative measures were employed to bring the Greek element into submission, while favouring the Muslim and Jewish elements in the age-old colonial fashion of "divide and rule". What the Ottomans had failed to accomplish in the late nineteenth century, the Italians hoped to achieve by forcing the islanders to emigrate and thus alter the ethnic map of the Dodecanese at the expense of the Greek element. It was a well-thought out plan, orchestrated by unscrupulous diplomats and executed by harsh and brutal administrators. Its aim was to change the whole fabric of Dodecanesian society, by force if necessary, and prepare the ground for the Italianization of the islands.[31]

In the diplomatic struggle which followed the outbreak of the First World War the Dodecanese constituted one of the many bribes by means of which the Allies (as the Entente powers were called henceforth) strove to secure the support of neutral Italy. Adopting a stance which was diametrically opposed to their exorcisms of the previous two years, the Allies had no hesitation in officially sanctioning Italy's presence in the islands with a view to securing Rome as an ally. In a world of secret diplomacy and *realpolitik*, moral or ethnic niceties played little if any role. Greece's misgivings and indeed her *amour propre* were brushed aside, as Italy's stance became of paramount importance for the Allies. For her part, Italy sought to achieve maximum territorial concessions from both groups of belligerents before committing herself to either. Her policy was guided by what Prime Minister Salandra defined as *sacro egoismo* (best rendered as sacred national selfishness).

> The guiding principles of our international policy will be tomorrow what they were yesterday... We must be bold in deeds... without prejudice and preconceptions, and uninfluenced by any

---

[30] Cited in Cole 1975: 54.

[31] *Inter alia*, see Tsakalakis n.d.: 29; FO 195/2451/496/496: Biliotti to Barnham (20 January 1913); Buonaiuti-Marongiu 1979: 18; Cole 1975: 50, 55; FO 195/2451/496/1111: Barnham to Lowther (5 March 1913); Angel 1980: 39-40, 81-2; Papachristodoulou 1972: 547-8.

> sentiment but that of an exclusive, unlimited devotion to our country, a sacred egoism for Italy.[32]

The absence of any reference to moral or lofty democratic principles in what came to constitute the *raison d'être* of Rome's foreign policy "derided the specious ideology" of the Allies,[33] while exposing Italy to accusations of "diplomatic *vagabondaggio*" and "double blackmail", both at the time and later on.[34] Yet, in many respects, Salandra merely expressed, albeit in a clumsy manner, what had been the driving principle of governments all over Europe when deciding whether to go to war or not. His idea was not novel; perhaps the way he expressed it and the means by which he and his successors attempted to realize it were.[35]

Italy's presence in the Dodecanese was sealed by virtue of the secret Pact of London. Concluded on 26 April 1915, it committed Rome to take the field against the Central Powers within a month. In exchange, Italy received entire sovereignty over the Dodecanese, the southern provinces of Austria-Hungary north of the Italian border, Trieste and the Istrian peninsula, almost the whole of the Adriatic littoral down to the port of Valona in Albania, as well as an unequivocal acknowledgement of her standing as a "great power" with indisputable economic interests in Asia Minor.[36]

The alacrity with which the Allies sanctioned Rome's claims to Albania, the Dodecanese and Asia Minor inadvertently impeded Greece's entry into the war on their side, strengthened the case of the Anti-Venizelists, and made the rift between King Constantine I and Prime Minister Venizelos seem inevitable. With Greece divided against herself, Italy's task of asserting her superiority over the "most annoying and uppity Small Power", in a manner befitting a "Great Power", became much easier.[37] Venizelos's dependence on Britain and France and

---

[32] Cited in Gottlieb 1957: 233.
[33] Mack Smith 1959: 305
[34] See Gottlieb 1957: 233; Renzi 1968: 1415; Roukounas 1983: 112.
[35] Mack Smith 1959: 305; Burgwyn 1993: 16.
[36] Text of pact in Albrecht-Carrié 1938: 334-9.
[37] Bosworth 1984: 64; Bosworth 1979: 253.

his compliance with their occupation of numerous regions and islands of the Greek state, justified on military and security grounds but in effect used as a means of forcing Constantine to resign and place their liberal protégé back in power, provided Rome with a tailor-made excuse for violating Greece's territorial integrity.[38] By the time Venizelos established his provisional government in Salonika in the autumn of 1916, Italian troops had already moved into areas of southern Albania which had been under Greek occupation since October 1914. Gradually they advanced into Epirus, a decision justified on the grounds of establishing an overland link to the Salonika front.[39] Yet this move was designed to forestall post-war Greek claims to southern Albania, rather than serve Allied strategy in the region or exercise pressure on King Constantine to abandon his neutralist policy.

Italy's military actions in southern Albania and Epirus were in line with Rome's anti-Greek policy which was conspicuously demonstrated in the case of the Dodecanese, where de-hellenization continued unabated.[40] As the Greek consul put it in the summer of 1916, those of his compatriots who had not yet fled from the islands had become "slaves who had to suppress their national feelings and obediently submit to the authorities' commands".[41] Taking a far more grim view of Italian designs, his successor wrote that the condition of the Greek community was gradually but steadily being reduced to that of "Kaffirs and Zulus".[42]

However, for Rome the issue at stake was not to annex a dozen rocky islands but rather to ensure that they would not fall into Greek hands, and to use them as pawns for securing a sphere of strategic and economic influence in Asia Minor. Therefore, her

---

[38] For Allied violation of Greece's neutrality and territorial integrity, see Tounda-Fergadi 1985.

[39] Leontaritis 1990: 327-34; Seton-Watson 1967: 463.

[40] *Inter alia*, see Archives of Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, AGMFA 1915/A/52: Papadakis to Athens (24 and 28 May 1915); Cole 1975: 219-20; Petsalis-Diomidis 1978: 29; Mackenzie 1940: 192, 203; AGMFA 1916/AAK/24: Chatzivassiliou to Athens (1 July 1916).

[41] AGMFA 1916/AAK/24: Chatzivassiliou to Athens (29 August 1916).

[42] AGMFA 1918/A/5/5: Dassos to Athens (10 January 1919).

policy in the Archipelago has to be seen in the more general context of Greco-Italian relations. Venizelist Greece was considered a main threat to Italian interests in Albania and Anatolia and for that reason at the beginning of the war Rome had sought to impede Greece's entry on the side of the Allies, while after June 1917 she had put every possible obstacle to the realization of Greek territorial claims.[43] It was on account of this objective that a serious attempt was made to alter the ethnic map of the Archipelago by forcing the Greeks to emigrate,[44] and, in the words of the British ambassador at Athens, by favouring and cajoling the local Turkish community to cry "viva, evviva Italia".[45] Irrespective of whether such a policy was compatible with the notion of two allies fighting for the cause of liberty and self-determination, it constituted one of the many factors that fostered Greco-Italian antagonism in the run-up to the Paris Peace Conference, where the victorious Allies met to discuss how to allot the war's spoils.

From the outset of the diplomatic deliberations it transpired that the Archipelago did not constitute one of Greece's primary national claims.[46] For Athens the issue of the islands was to be determined by the successful realization of the country's territorial aspirations elsewhere (particularly in Asia Minor). Consequently, on numerous occasions Venizelos and his successors urged the Dodecanesians to avoid expressing their desire for union with Greece too strongly, for fear of offending Rome and

---

[43] See Leontaritis 1990: chapter 9.

[44] Characteristically, whilst at the time of the Italian occupation the population of Rhodes was estimated at 45,000 (38,000 Greeks, 4,500 Turks, 2,500 Jews), by 1920 it had dropped to 31,000 (22,000, 6,000 and 3,000 respectively). See Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division 1943: 49; Great Britain, Historical Section of the Foreign Office 1920: 11.

[45] Cited in Llewellyn Smith 1973: 68.

[46] The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs well summed up the overall Greek attitude when minuting that "I cannot see the *slightest reason* why we should fight the battles of Greece. If she does not mind losing the islands, I do not see why we should go in mourning" (emphasis in the original); see FO 371/8822/C13383: Minute by Curzon (7 August 1923).

creating difficulties regarding Greek claims on Smyrna.[47] On the other hand, for successive Italian governments the islands were of secondary importance compared with Italian assets on the mainland of Anatolia, and were to be used solely as pawns in getting Allied recognition of, and backing for, Rome's interests in Asia Minor.[48] In the event, the relative value accorded to the issue of the islands by both countries as a means to an end may have been a predictable choice of action, but was hardly rewarding (particularly for Greece).

A month after the opening of the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919, Venizelos presented his country's territorial claims to the conference's Supreme Council. Speaking with great eloquence and avoiding matters sensitive to his interlocutors (for example, the issue of Cyprus), he asked for southern Albania (northern Epirus), eastern and western Thrace, a large share of Asia Minor (including Smyrna), and the Dodecanese.[49] At the suggestion of the British prime minister, a committee of experts was established to examine Greek claims and "make recommendations for a just settlement". In its final report, the Greek Territorial Committee, as this group of Allied experts became known, failed to reach a unanimous decision on the issue of the Archipelago. The British and French delegates maintained that, on account of the secret Pact of London, they considered it undesirable to discuss the question of the islands. Naturally, their Italian colleague concurred, while the American delegate suggested that, for ethnic reasons, the Dodecanese should be handed over to Greece.[50]

The failure of the first official Allied attempt to solve the question of the islands, and the landing first of Italian and then

---

[47] AGMFA 1919/B/59/5: Politis to Diomidis (28 May 1919); Venizelos Archives, Benaki Museum, Athens, VA 1919/F21/1898: Venizelos to Paraskevopoulos (19 June 1919); Karagiannis 1981: 267; AGMFA 1921/A/5/32: Greek community of Rhodes to Athens (11 August 1921); AGMFA 1921/A/5/33: Karayiannis to Athens (23 December 1921).

[48] Cole 1975: 237; Bosworth 1984: 66.

[49] Petsalis-Diomidis 1978: 136-7; Nicolson 1964: 255-6. Commenting on Venizelos's performance, a British official wrote: "We all thought it was the most brilliant thing we've ever heard, such amazing strength and tactfulness combined"; cited in Goldstein 1991: 244.

[50] Llewellyn Smith 1973: 75.

of Greek troops in Asia Minor (in late March and mid May 1919 respectively) forced Rome and Athens to consider reopening direct bilateral negotiations. A first round of negotiations had taken place in late 1918-early 1919, but it had ended in stalemate.[51] At first sight, the responsibility was shared by both sides: Greece refused to consider any solution other than the cession of the islands to her on ethnic grounds, while Italy brushed aside such niceties, stubbornly maintaining that the secret Pact of London had provided her with full sovereignty over the Archipelago. Yet the problem was not merely one of Greek cupidity and Italian obstinacy. A solution acceptable to both sides would inevitably have to be part of a wider Greco-Italian settlement which would include all outstanding territorial questions, like those of Asia Minor and Albania. What complicated matters further was that such a settlement would have to be endorsed and sanctioned by the Allies in the context of the Turkish Peace Treaty. Thus, far from being considered on its own merits, the question of the islands became instead an issue of power politics.

The second round of direct Greco-Italian negotiations led to the conclusion on 29 July 1919 of the Tittoni-Venizelos agreement. Constituting an accord, whose implementation depended primarily upon the decisions of the Supreme Council, it provided for the cession of the Dodecanese to Greece. The island of Rhodes would remain under Italian sovereignty, but would enjoy a large degree of autonomy, and would only be relinquished if Britain ceded Cyprus to Greece, and in any case not before 1924. In exchange, Greece undertook to support Italian claims for a mandate over Albania and for the acquisition of the Meander valley. Finally, both signatories obtained "pleine liberté d'action" should their interests not be satisfied in Asia Minor and Albania.[52]

Perhaps the only positive aspect of the agreement, as far as Greek interests were concerned, was that Rome officially acknowledged Athens as an "equal" bidder in the "struggle" for the ultimate disposition of the Dodecanese. Otherwise, it constituted an unrealistic and flawed document. Instead of

---

[51] See Carabott 1991: chapter 5.

[52] Text of accord in AGMFA 1920/A/K/2.

binding the two countries to fulfil their respective obligations, it constituted an accord that merely specified their intentions at that given moment. When in the summer of 1920 it began to transpire that Italy's hopes of attaining a mandate over Albania and an equitable sphere of influence in Anatolia were not going to materialize, Rome had no hesitation in renouncing the agreement.[53]

The Italian abrogation set in motion a new round of frantic negotiations, with the British and the French adopting a pro-Greek position and bringing "strong pressure to lean" on Rome.[54] In the event, Allied pressure (particularly London's threat not to sanction Rome's economic interests in Anatolia) forced Italy to trim her sails. Accordingly and on the same day the Turkish Peace Treaty was signed at Sèvres (10 August 1920), Greece and Italy concluded the Bonin-Venizelos treaty. Drawn upon the lines of the Tittoni-Venizelos accord of July 1919, it provided for the cession of the Dodecanese to Greece, with the exception of Rhodes which was to remain under Italian sovereignty for at least another fifteen years.[55] As a legal document that dealt exclusively with the Dodecanese, it constituted an international agreement whose realization was binding to both parties. Upon its conclusion, Venizelos hastened to inform King Alexander of the "twelve diamonds that are added to Your Majesty's Crown".[56] The response of his Italian colleague was much more down to earth and consisted of two words: "Sta bene."[57] These two stances illustrate quite appropriately the Greeks' idealism and the Italians' *realpolitik*.

In retrospect, however, the fact that the implementation of the Bonin-Venizelos treaty was dependent upon the ratification of the Treaty of Sèvres constituted a pivotal flaw. Allied disunity and the increasing strength of Kemal rendered the realization of the Turkish Peace Treaty highly improbable. As the Allies' proxy, Greece had to enforce upon a rejuvenated people with a strong leader the provisions of a most repugnant

---

[53] AGMFA 1920/A/4/3: Koromilas to Diomidis (23 July 1920).
[54] FO 371/5111/E9421: Curzon to Buchanan (3 August 1920).
[55] Text of bilateral treaty in AGMFA 1920/A/4/2.
[56] Ibid.: Venizelos to King Alexander (10 August 1920).
[57] Cited in Cole 1975: 251.

treaty. Yet, what buried the Treaty of Sèvres, together with the Bonin-Venizelos treaty, was the death of King Alexander in October 1920; a tragic, if somewhat comic incident, which set in motion a chain of events: the defeat of Venizelos in the elections of November 1920; the return of King Constantine I; the suspension of Allied diplomatic, financial and military aid to Athens; and, last but not least, the suicidal extension of the Greek campaign in Asia Minor. Churchill summed up the position well when writing that "it is perhaps no exaggeration to remark that a quarter of a million persons died of this monkey's bite".[58]

In the light of these important developments, the Bonin-Venizelos treaty was left to fall in abeyance. Far from handing over the Dodecanese to Greece and according the Rhodians a large degree of autonomy, the Italians continued their efforts to alter the ethnic map of the islands. Prominent members of the Greek community, including the archbishop of Rhodes, were expelled, numerous Muslim and Jewish families were allowed to take up residence, peasant settlers were brought from southern Italy, food supplies were rationed and martial law was established.[59] Engulfed in the politics of the εθνικός διχασμός (national schism), internationally isolated and waging a war in Asia Minor, Greece watched silently, unable to support her "unredeemed brethren".

Meanwhile the British, in the light of Italy's secret dealings with Kemal and her determination to become a broker between the Allies and Turkey,[60] embarked in earnest on a policy of compensating Rome for handing over the islands to Greece. To this effect, London sought to use the region of the Jubaland, situated between Italian Somaliland and British Kenya in north-east Africa, as a lever to force Rome out of the Archipelago and conclude yet another bilateral agreement with Greece, which this time would not be dependent on the

---

[58] Cited in Kinross 1964: 253.

[59] See Carabott 1991: chapter 9.

[60] FO 371/6481/E14: Rumbold to Curzon (31 December 1920); FO 371/6481/E694: Rumbold to War Office (14 January 1921); FO 371/6569/E2519: Rhodian Delegation to Lloyd George (24 February 1921); Cole 1975: 259.

implementation of any other treaty. However, this former German colony hardly constituted an attractive alternative, as it was "nothing but desert and steppe providing precarious pasturage for nomadic tribes".[61] Lloyd George's rather exaggerated assertions that the Jubaland was "a rich colony with great possibilities", and that "from the point of view of natural resources was worth fifty times as much as the Dodecanese"[62] failed to impress the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs. In any case, the latter could hardly be expected to publicly conclude an agreement with Athens which would diminish his country's sovereign rights over the Dodecanese, at a time when diplomatic relations between the two countries had been unofficially suspended. Moreover, the British offer of Jubaland merely amounted to the equitable compensation that Italy was entitled to according to article 13 of the secret Pact of London, and therefore did not constitute an additional reward.[63]

In the event, the whole issue was rendered obsolete by the Greek débâcle in Asia Minor. On 8 October 1922 Rome officially denounced the Bonin-Venizelos treaty on the justifiable grounds that, as it was connected with the ratification of the abortive Treaty of Sèvres, it was no longer applicable in view of the altered circumstances.[64] Although highly irritated, Greece was yet again unable to effectively further her interests in the Dodecanese. Following British pressure on Rome, the most Athens managed to secure was to include in article 15 of the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923), by which Turkey renounced in favour of Italy "à tous ses droits et titres sur les îles actuellement occupées par l'Italie, et les îlots qui en dépendent", the provision that the future of the Dodecanese will be ultimately "settled by the parties concerned".[65] In effect, this constituted a rather vague provision in as much as it left open the question of who the "parties concerned" were, although the British took the view

---

[61] Toynbee 1926: 464.

[62] FO 371/7799/E6616: Record of Anglo-Italian discussions (29 June 1922).

[63] FO 371/8413/C6137: Foreign Office memorandum, annex I (4 April 1923); Toynbee 1926: 463-4.

[64] VA 1922/F29/2892: Metaxas to Athens (9 October 1922).

[65] Tsakalakis n.d.: 64.

that the "final disposal of the twelve islands remains, in spite of article 15, for discussion between the Allies".[66] Yet, whatever the merits of this provision may have been, Rome's *de facto* possession of the Dodecanese was admitted beyond any doubt.

Pending the ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne, the British worked towards bringing some of the "parties concerned" to the negotiating table but to no avail. Italy could not concern herself "with the ill-humour of the men who rule Greece today", all the more so since Mussolini, who had assumed power in October 1922, had emphatically declared that "an Italo-Greek question about the Dodecanese did not exist".[67] It was evident that a solution could only be forced upon Rome if London delayed its ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne and used (again) the Jubaland as a lever. Indeed, Curzon believed that such a policy would "distress the Italians".[68] However, the assumption of power by the Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald in late January 1924 heralded a significant change in Britain's stance over the issue, which was conditioned by a number of factors: an earlier ruling of the Admiralty to the effect that Rome's presence in the Dodecanese would not be "vital to our naval strategy in the Mediterranean in the event of war with Italy"; London's dedication to international conciliation; the "necessity to maintain good relations with Mussolini" on account of the French occupation of the Ruhr and the question of German reparations; and Athens's failure to countenance any "solution of the Dodecanese question other than either the cession of all the islands or the granting of autonomy".[69] Accepting Mussolini's promise to eventually contemplate the cession of some of the Dodecanese to Greece, particularly those in which Italy "has lesser interest",[70] in late May 1924 MacDonald instructed his ambassador at Rome to inform *Il Duce* that he would be happy to

---

[66] FO 371/8822/C13383: Memorandum by Nicolson (3 August 1923).
[67] Cited in Cassels 1970: 97.
[68] FO 371/8822/C13383: Minute by Curzon (7 August 1923).
[69] Ibid.: Admiralty to Foreign Office (16 November 1922); Cassels 1970: 225; FO 371/9883/C7324: Minute by Nicolson (6 May 1924); Marks 1976: 49-54; FO 371/9882/C5696: Cheetham to MacDonald (4 April 1924).
[70] FO 371/9883/C7324: Mussolini to MacDonald (2 May 1924).

conclude an agreement over the Jubaland without further delay.[71] On 15 July 1924 the British prime minister and the Italian ambassador at London signed a treaty which officially transferred the Jubaland to Rome.[72] Exactly three weeks later, the two governments duly ratified the Treaty of Lausanne.[73]

Following the official and unequivocal recognition of Rome's *de jure* title over the Dodecanese, the question of the Archipelago ceased to be an issue of international diplomacy. In September 1924 the islands became part of the Italian kingdom, though not as colonies but as *possedimenti* (possessions).[74] Thereafter, and until Italy's entry into the Second World War in June 1940, the islands' status was never seriously questioned. Rome was left virtually free to pursue her policy of *Italianizzazione*, and, after 1936 when Cesare Maria De Vecchi (one of the *quadrumviri*) became governor, of *Fascistizzazione*.[75] Occasionally, Dodecanesian immigrants based in Greece attempted to bring the issue to the attention of the League of Nations, on account of Rome's efforts to de-hellenize the islands and create an autocephalous church. But neither Athens nor London ever endorsed their efforts. Indeed Venizelos, in September 1928 on his return from Rome where he had signed with Mussolini an agreement of "friendship and reconciliation", emphatically declared that

> no Dodecanesian question exists between Greece and Italy, as no Cypriote [sic] question exists between Greece and Great Britain. And, just as the occupation of Cyprus by Great Britain for half a century has not prevented the maintenance of excellent relations between Britain and Greece, the Dodecanese should not, and cannot, prevent the development and consolidation of relations of trust and amity between Greece and Italy.[76]

As a prominent Italian diplomat wrote in his memoirs, during the inter-war period Athens had "suppressed the word

---

[71] Ibid.: MacDonald to Graham (20 May 1924).
[72] Toynbee 1926: 467.
[73] Buonaiuti-Marongiu 1979: 44; Frangopoulos 1958: 53.
[74] Frangopoulos 1958: 53.
[75] Buonaiuti-Marongiu 1979: 9-10.
[76] FO 371/12931/C7553: Mackillop to Foreign Office (8 October 1928).

'Dodecanese' from the vocabulary of its political conversations" with Rome.[77] For their part, the British, in line with their policy of appeasement, failed to ascribe much importance to the question of the islands, always fearful of the probable repercussions that the cession of the Dodecanese to Greece might have on their occupation of Cyprus.[78]

The outbreak of the Second World War marked a turning-point in the history of the Dodecanese question. By a sudden, but not wholly unjustified, *volte-face* Britain became the champion of the islanders' emancipation from Italian rule. This change of heart was not in the least connected with the desire of applying the concept of national self-determination. On the contrary, it was dictated by strategic considerations and the need to lure Turkey into the war on the side of the Allies.[79] Greece's wish for an unequivocal statement on the part of London that at the conclusion of the war the islands would automatically be ceded to her, if only as a token of appreciation for her sacrifices in the common cause, was cynically brushed aside. The British could not see why the Greeks had to perceive everything in terms of a bargain, and argued that the ultimate disposition of the Dodecanese would only be determined at the post-war settlement.

In the event, and amidst calls for the partition of the islands and/or their autonomous status under a joint Greco-Turkish condominium, the Dodecanese were officially ceded to Greece in 1947. Once more, political and strategic considerations were put forward to justify a decision which should have been reached and realized some 35 years earlier, purely on ethnic grounds. However, like numerous similar issues of great power diplomacy, the Dodecanese question was interlocked in the web of power politics and expediency. In as much as the islands were pawns that were transformed into temporary assets, though never into queens, Italy's continuous presence in the Dodecanese up to the end of the Second World War signifies not only Rome's diplomatic craftiness but also the weakness of minor power victims and the insensibility of great power bystanders.

---

[77] Cited in Barros 1982: 5.
[78] FO 371/12931/C3830: Foreign Office to Colonial Office (May 1928).
[79] FO 371/37224/R3136: Churchill to Eden (4 April 1943).

References

Agapitidis, K. (1967). "Η διοίκηση των Δωδεκανήσων από την τουρκοκρατία ως την ένωση", *Δωδεκανησιακά* 2, 13-25

Albrecht-Carrié, R. (1938). *Italy at the Paris Peace Conference.* New York

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.* London (2nd ed.)

Anderson, M. (1983). *The Eastern Question 1774-1923. A study in international relations.* London

Angel, M. (1980). *The Jews of Rhodes. The history of a Sephardic community.* New York

Augustinos, G. (1992). *The Greeks of Asia Minor: confession, community, and ethnicity in the nineteenth century.* Kent, Ohio

Barros, J. (1982). *Britain, Greece and the politics of sanctions: Ethiopia, 1935-1936.* London and New Jersey

Booth, C. and I. Booth (1928). *Italy's Aegean possessions. The tragedy of the twelve islands.* London

Bosworth, R. (1970). "Britain and Italy's acquisition of the Dodecanese 1912-1915", *The Historical Journal* 13/4, 683-705

Bosworth, R. (1979). *Italy: the least of the Great Powers. Italian foreign policy before the First World War.* London

Bosworth, R. (1984). "Italy and the end of the Ottoman Empire", in: M. Kent (ed.), *The Great Powers and the end of the Ottoman Empire.* London

Buonaiuti-Marongiu, C. (1979). *La politica religiosa del Fascismo nel Dodecanneso.* Naples

Burgwyn, H. (1993). *The legend of the mutilated victory: Italy, the Great War, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1915-1919.* Westport, Connecticut

Carabott, P. (1991). *The Dodecanese question 1912-1924.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London

Carabott, P. (1993). "The temporary Italian occupation of the Dodecanese: a prelude to permanency", *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 4/2, 285-312

Cassels, A. (1970). *Mussolini's early diplomacy.* Princeton, NJ

Childs, T. (1990). *Italo-Turkish diplomacy and the war over Libya 1911-1912.* Leiden

Cole, S. (1975). *Italian policy in the eastern Mediterranean 1912-1923.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge

Fabo-Macris, A. de (1981). *The Aegean island question and Greece: a diplomatic history 1911-1914.* Unpublished PhD thesis, George Washington University

Finlay, G. (1877). *History of Greece from its conquest by the Romans to the present time, B.C. 146 to A.D. 1864.* Edited by H.F. Tozer, vol. VI, Part 2. Oxford

Frangopoulos, I. (1958). *Η Δωδεκάνησος υπό ιταλοκρατίαν.* Athens

Giolitti, G. (1923). *Memoirs of my life.* London

Goldstein, E. (1991). *Winning the peace. British diplomatic strategy, peace planning, and the Paris Peace Conference 1916-1920.* Oxford

Gottlieb, W. (1957). *Studies in secret diplomacy during the Great War.* London

Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division (1943). *Dodecanese.* London

Great Britain, Historical Section of the Foreign Office (1920). *Islands of the northern and eastern Aegean*. London

Grey, E. (1925). *Twenty-five years*, vol. I. London

Hayne, M. (1987). "Great Britain, the Albanian question and the Concert of Europe", *Balkan Studies* 28/2, 327-53

Karagiannis, A. (1981). *Greece's quest for empire at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919-1920: the diplomacy of illusions*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Indiana University

Kinross, Lord (1964). *Ataturk: the rebirth of a nation*. London

Kitromilides, P. (1990). "'Imagined communities' and the origins of the national question in the Balkans", in: M. Blinkhorn and Th. Veremis (eds.), *Modern Greece: nationalism and nationality*. Athens

Kondoyioryis, Y. (1982). *Κοινωνική δυναμική και πολιτική αυτοδιοίκηση. Οι ελληνικές κοινότητες της τουρκοκρατίας*. Athens

Leontaritis, G. (1990). *Greece and the First World War: from neutrality to intervention, 1917-1918*. New York

Llewellyn Smith, M. (1973). *Ionian vision. Greece in Asia Minor 1919-1922*. London

Mack Smith, D. (1959) *Italy: a modern history*. London

Mackenzie, C. (1940). *Aegean memories*. London

Marks, S. (1976). *The illusion of peace. International relations in Europe 1918-1933*. London

Nicolson, H. (1964). *Peacemaking 1919*. London

Papachristodoulou, Ch. (1972). *Ιστορία της Ρόδου*. Athens

Petsalis-Diomidis, N. (1978). *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference (1919).* Salonika

Renzi, W. (1968). "Italy's neutrality and entrance into the Great War: a re-examination", *The American Historical Review* 78, 1414-32

Rodd, J., Sir (1925). *Social and diplomatic memories,* vol. III. London

Roukounas, E. (1983). *Εξωτερική πολιτική 1914-1923.* Athens

Seton Watson, C. (1967). *Italy from liberalism to fascism 1870-1925.* London

Speronis, S. (1955). *The Dodecanese Islands. A study of European diplomacy, Italian imperialism and Greek nationalism, 1911-1947.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Michigan

Stéphanopoli, J. (1912). *Les îles de l'Égée: leurs privilèges.* Athens

Stieve, F. (n.d.). *Isvolsky and the World War.* London

Tounda-Fergadi, A. (1985). "Violations de la neutralité grècque par les puissances de l'Entente durant la Première Guerre Mondiale", *Balkan Studies* 26/1, 113-29

Toynbee, A. (ed.) (1926). *Survey of international affairs 1924.* London

Tsakalakis, A. (n.d.). *The Dodecanese. A study of international law.* London

Vardamidis, E. (1948). *Ιστορία της νήσου Μεγίστης (Καστελλορίζου).* Alexandria

Volonakis, M. (1922a). *The island of roses and her eleven sisters.* London

Volonakis, M. (1922b). *The national claims of the Dodecanese.* London

King's College London

The fabrication of the Middle Ages: Roides's *Pope Joan*

Ruth Macrides

Pope Joan, Emmanuel Roides's "youthful sin", published in 1866, is probably one of the best known works of Greek prose outside Greece.[1] It provoked immediate and strong reactions both within Greece and without.[2] Its irreverent portrayal of the Middle Ages and its surprising juxtapositions of medieval and contemporary events, people and issues, are some of its most salient characteristics. The work continues to attract and amuse readers in every language.

Set in the western Middle Ages of the ninth century, a period and a place scarcely known to the Greek reading public, *Pope Joan* tells the story of a woman who became pope, a story whose veracity some think Roides actually believed in.[3] Roides's erudition is impressive and only the most well-educated medievalist, with an impeccable knowledge of the historiography of the Middle Ages, has the tools to analyse and pass judgment on Roides's historical research. This area of *Pope Joan* has been left untouched, while other, literary, aspects of the

---

[1] There are two English translations, one from the nineteenth century: J.H. Freese, *Pope Joan: An historical romance* (London 1900), and Lawrence Durrell, *Pope Joan* (London 1954, 1960, 1981). For Charles H. Collette's partial translation, see note 7 below. For translations of *Pope Joan* into other languages see Alain Boureau, *La papesse Jeanne* (Paris 1988), pp. 312-14. I thank Peter Mackridge for calling my attention to this work.

[2] A selection of reviews of the book is printed by Alkis Angelou, *Η Πάπισσα Ιωάννα* (Athens 1993), pp. 365-410; see also pp. 42-4 for Roides's own reference to his critics and for the Church's reaction. For the French reaction see Boureau, *La papesse Jeanne*, p. 313.

[3] See Charles H. Collette, *Pope Joan: A historical study* (London 1886), pp. 6-7; L. Durrell, *Pope Joan*, p. 10; Rosemary and Darroll Pardoe, *The Female Pope* (Wellingborough 1988), p. 74 and pp. 76-82 for those who still believe in the truth of her existence.

work have been discussed.[4] *Pope Joan* is a very funny book but it is also the product of a very erudite man.[5]

Pope Joan is a work which is not easily categorised. It is often defined by its opposition to certain literary forms and to institutions: an "anti-historical novel", an "anti-romance", "anti-church"; yet no one category is inclusive of all its qualities. Roides himself provided a number of descriptions of the work; the title page presents it as a "medieval study", the preface declares it "a narrative encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages", and the main body of the work refers to it as a "narrative", a "true history".[6] These categorisations seem to indicate a work of historical research rather than literary fiction at a time when the Greek reading public sought out historical novels, both foreign and Greek, as never before. Yet both Greek and imported novels of this kind were promoting historical accuracy and documentation.[7] In his preface Roides prepared his readers for his historical reconstruction of the Middle Ages, asserting that:

> Every phrase in *Pope Joan*, almost every word, is based on the witness of a contemporary writer. The monks' anecdotes were taken from the chronicles of monasteries of that time, the miracles from medieval synaxaries, [...] strange theological beliefs from the writings of contemporary theologians. [...] Every description of a city, a building, clothes, food... is accurate even in its smallest detail, as can be seen in part from the notes at the end of the work which I could have easily multiplied. (70-71)

---

[4] See, especially, Dimitris Tziovas, "Η Πάπισσα Ιωάννα και ο ρόλος του αναγνώστη", *Χάρτης* 15 (July 1985) 427-42 (reprinted in his *Μετά την αισθητική* (Athens 1987), pp. 259-82), and Maria Kakavoulia, "Πάπισσα Ιωάννα: πολύτοπο/παλίμψηστο", *Χάρτης* 15 (April 1985) 294-312.

[5] A longer study, by the present writer, of Roides's historiographical method and his portrayal of Byzantium in particular is to appear in: P. Magdaleno and D. Ricks (eds.), *Byzantium and the Modern Greek identity*.

[6] All references to *Pope Joan* are from the edition by A. Angelou, as in note 2 above. All translations are my own.

[7] On the reception of the historical novel in Greece and for Greek historical novels see Sophia Denisi, *Το ελληνικό ιστορικό μυθιστόρημα και ο Sir Walter Scott (1830-1880)* (Athens 1994).

He provides a scholarly apparatus, with notes at the end of the work, notes at the bottom of the page, and a very detailed introduction which presents the medieval sources for a female pope's existence and the later scholarly commentary on the sources' reliability.[8] The historian's task and Roides's are one and the same, for they attempt to answer the same question:

> But, from the sixth to the eleventh century, from the last Roman emperor to the first knight, who lived on our planet? What did they do, what did they eat, what did they believe, and what did they wear? This question only the historian by profession can answer, who undertakes the unenviable task of leafing through the boundless collections of medieval manuscripts. [...] So I, too, extracted from each of those tomes condemned to eternal oblivion, passages describing customs of past times, queer beliefs, popular superstitions, relics of idolatry, and anything else I found which had escaped the attention of more recent historians... (69-70)

If Roides's disclosure of his research tools and methods is not enough to show the reader that *Pope Joan* is a work of history, and not literature, a written work based on others' written works and not an imaginative recreation, he makes the point in other ways, in the main body of the book, contrasting the medieval world recreated in novels with that of historiography:

---

[8] Greek editions of *Pope Joan* and translations of the work more often than not produce a partial edition of the work, leaving out one of the above, usually the introduction and the notes at the end; for example, those published by Εκδόσεις Γαλαξία (Athens 1960, 1983) and Εκδόσεις Σ. Δαρέμα (Athens, no date). The translations into English offer greater variations: Charles H. Collette, *Pope Joan: A historical study* (London 1886) is a translation of Roides's introduction only, without the text of the novel; J.H. Freese, *Pope Joan: An historical romance* (London 1900) translates Roides's preface, the novel and the notes at the back, but not the introduction; Lawrence Durrell, *Pope Joan* (London 1954, 1960, 1981) translates his adaptation of the novel and supplies his own notes at the back but does not give Roides's preface, introduction or notes. These incomplete and selective editions are misleading, given the integral significance of the introduction and notes to Roides's work, as Kakavoulia, op. cit., has demonstrated.

> Has it ever happened to you, dear reader, that when you had passed a day reading a novel about the Middle Ages, such as the *Deeds of King Arthur*, or the *Loves of Lancelot and Guinevere*, that you let the book fall as you began in your mind to compare the past age with the present, longing once more for those times when reverence, patriotism and love still ruled the world? When faithful hearts burned under steel breast-plates, when pious lips kissed the feet of the Crucified; when queens wove tunics for their husbands and virgins waited for years in the rooms of their castles for the return of their suitors; when the illustrious Roland withdrew to a cave opposite the nunnery where his beloved was shut up and spent thirty years looking at the light in her window [...]?
>
> Frequently among such reveries I felt my blood warm and my eyes grow moist with emotion. But when I left the minstrels I sought the truth under the dust of the centuries, in the chronicles of contemporaries, in the laws of kings, the "proceedings" of synods and the rulings of popes, when instead of Hersart I unfurled Baronius and Muratori and saw naked before me the Middle Age, I lamented then not that those golden days had passed, but that they had never dawned in the universe of faith and heroism. This book contains only outrages or caricatures but these are the true, photographic, so to speak, images of people of that time. What I say, I support by invincible witnesses, like the kings their laws by the lance. (134-5)[9]

Roides, then, presents *Pope Joan* as a work of serious historical writing and, if his readers do not like what they see, it is because they have been served up a false picture by writers of novels. If we take Roides at his word, he offers a recreation of Joan's ninth-century world, drawn from all the available sources. His readers are not to be allowed the luxury of losing themselves in a golden world of "reverence, patriotism, and love". But they are not even allowed to lose themselves in the much less golden world he is offering them. He yanks them out of the ninth-century past and into the procedures of reading and writing, reminding them how and when the book before them was produced.

Roides involves the reader in the production of the book in several ways. One is the constant reference to sources by means of

---

[9] Durrell's translation (p. 39) excludes the last two sentences of this paragraph. See note 7.

the notes. He sends the reader from the text to a footnote which sometimes refers to a note at the back or to the introduction. One text leads to another, breaking up the continuity of the narrative and the unity of the work. In this way the reader is constantly reminded of the textual basis of the book, of the procedure involved in producing it.[10]

The narrator draws the reader into his own work and experience as a reader by direct reference to the research he did or did not do. In discussing Joan's parentage, with which all good biographies begin, the narrator informs us:

> If I were to spend some years comparing manuscripts, I might be able to learn whether Joan's father was called Willibald or Wallafrid but I doubt whether the public would repay me for this effort. (115)

Instead of scholarship we are offered a parody of scholarship. Instead of a smooth narrative we are presented with a problem. We are reminded that the heroine and her story have their origin in books in a library when the narrator describes the sixteen-year-old Joan , as she sees her reflection in a river: "This is the way Joan saw herself in the water, this is the picture I also saw in a manuscript in Cologne" (125).

The narrator calls attention to himself as a reader but also as a writer: "The iron pen with which I am writing this true history is of English make, from the factories of Smith..." (138). "The great poets, Homer and Mr. P. Soutsos write beautiful verses in their sleep but I always wipe my pen before I put my nightcap on my head" (214). References to the time of writing, sudden and surprising insertions into the text of contemporary people, events, or issues, likewise prevent readers from abandoning themselves to the ninth-century reality which the author has promised them. "Alcuin was English; England then had the monopoly on theologians as today (it has) on steam engines" (119). The insertions surprise the reader, creating amusing parallels and comparisons. Joan's travels with monks occasion the following observation: "Today inns are set up for the

---

[10] For a stimulating and ground-breaking analysis of intertextuality in *Pope Joan*, see Kakavoulia, op. cit.

sake of travellers; in the Middle Ages many monks became travellers for the sake of the inns" (135). After a digression in which the narrator recommends the Catholic Church to any Turk or fire-worshipper who might wish to convert to Christianity, he says, "Let us return to the text and let the error of my digressions be attributed to the 27 newspapers of Athens and the four bells of the Russian church which interrupt at every minute the thread of my narrative" (143). When Joan is in Athens bishop Niketas questions her

> on the dogma which had been adopted among the learned of the West concerning the Eucharist, that is, if they believe that the bread and wine were actually changed into the body and blood of the Saviour, or whether they consider them symbol and image of the Divine Body. This question occupied minds at that time, like the Eastern Question today. (197)

The frequent allusion to contemporary preoccupations, to the names and problems of Roides's day, and to the processes involved in the making of *Pope Joan*, tie the reader to the written page, to the text as text. That text is presented by the author as an unadulterated medieval world, a photographic image, based on historically documented, and therefore "real", people, places, events and details of everyday life. But let us look more carefully. What can we learn about the Middle Ages from Roides?

The author, in his introduction, insists on the authenticity of his narrative – "almost every word is based on the witness of a medieval writer" – yet when we arrive at Part 4, the last part of the narrative concerning Joan's election as pope and death as she gave birth in procession in Rome, the narrator states, "Instead of taking the material for my narrative, as before, from my head, I am obliged to draw it (now) from august chroniclers" (215). This information contradicts the assertions made throughout the book up to this point and therefore leads to confusion and uncertainty about the previous pages.

To confusion by contradiction is added misinformation. Roides makes his scholarly apparatus prominent, drawing attention to its workings and its failings. He attaches footnotes to statements where an explanation in the text would have sufficed and omits to give a footnote where it is needed. But in

both cases, the information in the text is false. Thus, the word στραβουλάριος is given a footnote, with the explanation that it means "inn-keeper" (137 n.1),[11] while in another passage, Roides makes a passing reference to a "trustworthy hagiographer" but gives no bibliographical reference: Frumentius's ass

> started to run, emitting as a kind of protest, such resonant brayings that (according to a trustworthy hagiographer) many of the sleeping virgins, thinking that the trump of Judgment had sounded, extruded their bald heads from the tombs. (152)

This passage contains most of the hallmarks of Roides's style: his irreverence to Christian dogma, to historical documentation and the sharp shock at the end: "sleeping virgins" turn out to be long dead and, therefore, necessarily "bald".

Roides draws on a variety of medieval sources which belong to different genres of writing; saints' lives, chronicles, *erotapokriseis, synaxaria*. He takes motifs or information from these and elaborates on them, creating something new in the process. To take the example of hagiography: in this tradition, the future saint is often a much-prayed-for child. In Roides's version, Joan's mother, Jutta, lit a candle each day before the icon of St Paternus, that she might have a child. Her prayers are answered. A miracle occurs for, although her husband has been castrated, she becomes pregnant with Joan when two archers of the Count of Erfurt rape her, "reminding her by force of the true destiny of woman on earth" (120-1). Thus, the *topos* is distorted, an illegitimate saint is born and, in addition, a new saint is invented by the play on the word *pater*.

In hagiography, the saint shows early signs of his or her bright future. So too Joan, who as an infant "never wished to suckle on a Wednesday or a Friday but whenever the breast was offered to her on a fast day, she turned away her eyes in horror" (121). The note at the back gives the information that "St Stephen and St Rocco did not feed at the breast on days of fast.

---

[11] Roides has made up this designation for an "inn-keeper" from a real title, *taboularios*, "notary", but has added the "s" to make the word sound like the name of a keeper of stables and the "r", which gives the technical and official-sounding title a prefix στραβός = "crooked", "blind".

The latter even bit the breast when it was offered to him on a fast day. See the *Martyrologium* of Maurolykos at 28 November and 16 August" (255). Roides's note leads his readers down the wrong track. Early signs of asceticism are not uncommon in saints' lives and indeed St Stephen the Young (†765) and St Rock (fourteenth century) are celebrated on the days indicated by Roides. But neither saint appears to have been celebrated for refusing the breast, nor is there a *Martyrologium* of Maurolykos or "Blackwolf". This is probably a composite name, taken from the names of two ninth-century churchmen who did compile *martyrologia*: Rabanus Maurus, archbishop of Mainz, and Wolfhard, monk in Franconia.[12] Yet, Joan's abstinence as an infant is an element found in some saints' lives not cited by Roides: a ninth-century Latin Life of St Nicholas by John the Deacon records that "he took the breast only once on Wednesdays and Fridays".[13] Thus, we are offered a mixture of the documented and the made-up, the true and the false. But which is which?

To shun the company and games of other children is another quality which marks the future saint early in life. Joan had "holy relics, crucifixes and prayer beads as her first playthings" (121). Roides's variation on the theme mocks the convention. By his use of αθύρματα for "toys", a word which implies the frivolous and changeable and is used of fate, love, and the gods, he adds to the ridiculous nature of his innovation.

Thus, what appears at first sight to be an impressive and serious show of scholarship contributes not to the reader's knowledge of the Middle Ages but to confusions, surprises and misinformation. The reader no longer knows anything for certain. What seems certain because it has a textual basis can no longer be assumed to be true. What seems false because it is undocumented could very well be true.

Roides sets up confusions in categories. Just as he mixes "true" and "false" material, so too he mixes heterogeneous things in the same sentence, referring to writers of fiction along with writers of history, fictional characters and historical personages:

---

[12] J. Dubois, *Les Martyrologes du Moyen Age latin* (Brepols 1978), pp. 56-8.

[13] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, transl. W. E. Ryan, Vol. I (Princeton 1993), p. 21.

> Much better known are the later Middle Ages, when iron-clad heroes and white-robed heroines appear, the Tristans, the Lionhearts, the Templars [...] from the books of Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, from museum collections and the arias of Rossini. (69)

The boundaries between history and legend, fact and fiction, are not clearly delineated. Both history and legend depend on texts which depend on other texts. Roides says this implicitly and explicitly. The notes at the back which comment on the scene of Father Ralegus's christening of the geese as fish (137) show that Roides's source could be historical or fictional:

> Dumas described a similar scene in his novel *Queen Margot*. He took it from the *Chronicle of Charles* of Mérimée who copied it from the aforementioned *synaxarion* of St Odo, where it is found almost word for word. (261)

Just as *Pope Joan* is a pastiche of sources, so too are its aims numerous and varied. Roides rejects the literary conventions of his time – the historical novel, with its heavy emphasis on detailed documentation. He likewise attacks the conventions of the romantic novel. When describing the sea journey of Joan and Frumentius to Athens, his reverie on the beauty of nature is quickly reduced to the banal:

> Nothing can be sweeter in such weather than to find oneself lying on the deck of a swiftly travelling ship, passing the time between breakfast and dinner with your head supported on your beloved's knees; sharing her admiration of the beauty of earth, sky and water. The stomach and the heart must be at ease so that we can admire nature. Otherwise the sun looks to us – to me at any rate – like a machine for ripening melons, the moon a lantern for thieves, the trees merely so much firewood, the sea mere brine, and life about as insipid as a boiled pumpkin. (187)

An example of Romanticism which falls deflated, not to the earth, but onto the printed page, is the following: "After a great deal of conversation, interrupted by kisses as authors use commas and full stops, they fell asleep on the Pentelic marble..." (199-200).

Roides handles most of the literary conventions of his day with irreverence: romantic poetry – frequent comical references to "Mr. P. Soutsos"[14]; the historical novel – he plays havoc with documentation and recreation of the past. But most of all it is the Church which he strikes at with his female pope.

Pope Joan has traditionally been received as an anti-Church work. Certainly this is how the Church received it, excommunicating Roides.[15] In his preface to the work, he makes direct and constant references to the way in which he presented the Church:

> Many may accuse me of a more serious sin, the daring with which I present the ecclesiastical muck of the Middle Ages, in the West and in Byzantium, sometimes in asides on the present state of our Church. The unbiased reader will see that there is not a trace of the polemical in this. (73)

His criticism is of the "medieval" nature of the Eastern Church:

> We considered it good to remain attached to the conventions of the Middle Ages, like oysters to a rock. Our liturgy lasts two hours, like that in the time of St Basil, and has no listeners. Our priests are chosen from the "scum of the earth", as in the time of the Apostle Paul, and no one listens to their counsels. Our fasts are fitting for tonsured monks and no one fasts, our icons are monstrous and no one kisses them; as for our ecclesiastical nasal voicings, I judge it superfluous to say anything. [...] Whoever enters one of our churches is overwhelmed by one feeling only, the desire to leave. (74-5)

More than once elsewhere in *Pope Joan* Roides refers to the state of the Eastern Church which, unlike the Roman Church has not understood the need to change its image in order to attract people:

---

[14] For Roides's position with regard to Romanticism and P. Soutsos in particular, see Athena Georganta, *Εμμανουήλ Ροΐδης: Η πορεία προς την Πάπισσα Ιωάννα (1860-1865)* (Athens 1993), pp. 223-7.

[15] For the Church's reaction, see Angelou, *Η Πάπισσα Ιωάννα*, pp. 43-6.

> Religions resemble women. Both, as long as they are young, need neither smartening up nor rouge to be surrounded by worshippers ready to sacrifice even their lives for them, like the first Christians and Aspasia's lovers. But when they get old, they need to resort to rouge and ornaments. The Roman Church understood this; when it saw the zeal of the faithful turning cold, it resorted to painters and sculptors, [...] while the Eastern Church, either out of poverty or pride, although the elder sister, has insisted on wanting to draw the faithful by nasal songs and scowling icons. (159)

For Roides, the Church should move with the times. This means not only adopting cosmetic changes but also becoming a separate institution, divorced from the affairs of the state. He attacked the role of religion as a uniting force of Hellenism. In his preface, he described the attitude of many people who were against change in the Church, "because of the gratitude we feel for the Church which freed us from the foreign yoke and through which we hope sooner or later for the *Megali Idea* to be carried out – that is, for the freeing of Epiros and Thessaly" (75). Here he belittles the Church's role in the Great Idea, with its narrow definition, confining it to the freeing of Epiros and Thessaly.[16]

Roides's reply to the Encyclical of Excommunication issued by the Holy Synod exhibits the same outrageous fabrication which is at work in his *Pope Joan*. In this, Roides reminded the bishops of their unlawful conduct and their repeated anti-Christian actions:

> It is not your part, my esteemed prelates, to denounce others as upsetters of the established order, when you have for three years been overturning and trampling on the holy canons and the laws of the state, seeking to transfer bishops from one See to another. It is even less fitting for you to denounce others as impious while [...] you honour the saints so little that you change their names in accordance with the political circumstances, making them sometimes adherents of Otto, at other times of the Rebels.[17]

---

[16] See Georganta, op. cit., pp. 211, 249-50.

[17] For the text of Roides's reply, see Angelou, op. cit., pp. 295-316; the passage quoted above is from pp. 314-15.

In a footnote to this statement, Roides gives details of the incident which involved the change in the saint's name:

> When the young Dosios shot at Queen Amalia, there was set up in the church of the Metropolis an icon of St Sozon, who saved from the assassin's bullet "his pure, chaste, immaculate queen", as the Holy Metropolitan called Amalia at that time. After a while, however, when the October change in government came, the name of St Sozon was changed to St Eleutherios, in memory of the revolution "which cleansed the earth of the Fatherland from the tyrants". See the article in *Αυγή* which was written about this at that time.[18]

Roides uses here his well-attested method of providing a footnote to back up his text. Yet, there is no article in the newspaper *Αυγή* to this effect and his reference must be purposely vague. It seems, instead, that in 1863 the small Byzantine Church of the Saviour, του Σωτήρος, which was next to the Metropolis, had its name changed to Άγιος Ελευθέριος. Roides, once again, gives documentation which turns out not to exist in the form in which he reports it. He plays with the evidence as he does on the names "Sozon" (Σώζων) and "Soter" (Σωτήρ).[19]

Nothing is sacred for Roides. He presents us with a confusion of values and categories. True stories turn out to be false and false stories true. He blurs the once clear distinction between historical truth and created truth, between legend and fact, implying with his cross-references, footnotes and scholia that *Pope Joan* is as fabricated or as authentic as pope Joan. As Roides said at the end of his preface, it is up to us to believe what we wish.[20]

University of Birmingham

---

[18] Angelou, ibid., pp. 314-15, note 1; Georganta, op. cit., pp. 295-316.

[19] See the very careful analysis of this passage by Georganta, op. cit., pp. 55-6.

[20] Angelou, p. 113: Ήδη δε αφίνω έκαστον ό,τι βούλεται να πιστεύση.

Reflections on Kazantzakis and the Greek language

Irene Philippaki-Warburton

I discovered Kazantzakis over forty years ago in the Vikelaia Library in Iraklion. I say that I discovered him because no-one introduced him to me. During those years (the early 1950s) Nikos Kazantzakis was not even mentioned in schools, let alone taught. His books were not displayed in bookstore windows and the people around me who were reading literature preferred Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Rolland, Maurois, Zweig, and other, mostly foreign, authors. As a result, no-one led me to Kazantzakis, neither the school nor the larger intellectual environment of Iraklion. I was brought to him by the church. This irony would, I believe, have amused Kazantzakis.

It was 1952 or 1953 when Father Xenos was sent from Athens to the church of Agios Minas, the patron saint of Iraklion. Father Xenos was an attractive, highly educated and extremely inspired preacher. His sermons made a strong and lasting impression upon his audience, especially us teenage girls, at an age when heart and soul are open and in readiness (είναι σε πλήρη διαθεσιμότητα, as Kazantzakis might have put it) to receive all kinds of ideas, and when the mind begins to pose questions and to seek answers and explanations.

Xenos's preaching fascinated us because, apart from his strong personality, he had the ability to present his ideas not in a religious, metaphysical, apocalyptic way but in a dialectical form supported by philosophical argumentation. For these reasons the sermons in the church and his Sunday School classes were similar to lessons in philosophy, and this made them all the more interesting, challenging and attractive. Xenos cultivated my interest in philosophy so that when he occasionally mentioned the name of the German philosopher Nietzsche, whom he characterized as godless, mad, insolent, blasphemous etc., my curiosity was aroused to find out more.

At the Vikelaia library I found Nietzsche's *Thus spake Zarathustra,* which turned out to have been translated into Greek, indeed into perfect *katharevousa,* by Kazantzakis. The text was very powerful, the messages were tremendously daring and of course completely new to a 15-year-old girl like myself, brought up in Iraklion at that time. As for the language, which was Kazantzakis's contribution to that text, it was extremely poetic. I was both intellectually impressed and emotionally shaken. I would read and re-read every page many times over with excitement; I would copy whole sections and learn them by heart so that I could have access to the book even when I was away from it.

My appetite was whetted, and I tried to find more books by Nietzsche. Instead of Nietzsche I came across a little book with the title *Ασκητική.* At the beginning I was not sure whether it was another translation of Nietzsche by Kazantzakis or a book by Kazantzakis himself.

Ασκητική is the book in which Kazantzakis articulates his credo, and it is clearly an adaptation and to some degree an extension of Nietzsche's philosophy. However, even here, we can discern some important points of difference between Nietzsche's philosophy, as it appeared in the book *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* and that of Kazantzakis in *Ασκητική.*

One difference is that of form and more specifically of language, and the other concerns the content of the two works. From the point of view of form we notice that, whereas in his translation of *Zarathustra* Kazantzakis uses *katharevousa,* which he handles with great confidence and skill, in *Ασκητική,* where he attempts to express his own version of ideas similar to those of Nietzsche, the language is a smooth demotic. From the point of view of content we see that Kazantzakis's hero, who is also some sort of superman, is neither as desperate nor as cruel or ruthless as Nietzsche's superman. It is as if the nihilism, negativism and hardness of Nietzsche's superman has become more moderate and the Nietzschean hero has given way to a Greek Akritas whose desperation is much more tolerable because it is comforted by a sunny and joyous Greek landscape which inspires love for his country, compassion for his fellow-countrymen and love for life itself, as we can see from the following excerpts from *Ασκητική.*

> Αγάπα τον άνθρωπο γιατί είσαι εσύ [...] Αγάπα το σώμα σου, μονάχα με αυτό στη γης ετούτη μπορείς να παλέψεις και να πνευματώσεις την ύλη. Αγάπα την ύλη απάνω της πιάνεται ο θεός και πολεμάει.
>
> Πιστεύω στον άγρυπνο αγώνα που δαμάζει και καρπίζει την ύλη, τη ζωοδόχο πηγή φυτών, ζώων και ανθρώπων.
>
> Πιστεύω στην καρδιά του ανθρώπου, το χωματένιο αλώνι που μέρα και νύχτα παλεύει ο Ακρίτας με το θάνατο.

From the moment I discovered first Nietzsche and then immediately afterwards Kazantzakis, the walk between Agios Minas and Agia Paraskevi, where we had our Sunday School meetings, on the one hand, and the Vikelaia library on the other, became an intellectual to-ing and fro-ing between Xenos's inspired religious lessons and the challenging and, to some, subversive philosophical messages of Nietzsche and Kazantzakis. In spite of the contrast between these two worlds I felt no conflicts and no psychological trauma, only great excitement. Later on in 1955 in the Theotokopoulos room of the Vikelaia library, I had the great fortune to hear Kimon Friar speak about Kazantzakis's *Οδύσσεια*. I was by then more than ready to fall completely under Kazantzakis's spell.

After *Ασκητική* I discovered *Βίος και πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά*, and with this book I passed on to yet another world. It was as if I had descended from the abstract intellectual level of philosophy which was occupied by gods and supermen and shapes and symbols and had entered a garden, earthy, full of light, fragrance and sensuality. The hero Zorbas, in spite of the fact that he too embodies the ideas of heroic pessimism, is, at the same time, the opposite of an ascetic (ασκητής) because he participates in life by living with all the means he has available, arms, legs, body, senses, mind. Zorbas too is aware that there is no final solution for the human race and no hope of a god or an afterlife. Nevertheless, he is won over by the love for life itself; thus the total negation of Nietzsche's nihilism, as it passes through the mature personality of Kazantzakis, becomes hellenized and turns into an affirmation of life, which presents itself within the natural and human Cretan landscape and

folklore and is filtered through a language which is a clear and smooth demotic with some Cretan influence.

The three books mentioned above, the translation of *Thus spake Zarathustra*, the *Ασκητική* and *Βίος και πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά*, represent the intellectual but also, in parallel, the linguistic stages of Kazantzakis's development. It is this intellectual and linguistic progress and their interdependence which we shall try to present here. We must stress from the start that when we examine Kazantzakis's language we cannot restrict ourselves to a simple enumeration and classification of its formal characteristics. If we want to understand Kazantzakis the artist, it is important to investigate the special relationship which Kazantzakis had with the Greek language because this relationship, as I will suggest, in agreement with Bien (1972), who has provided the main source and inspiration for this paper, reveals how his personality and his art developed and matured.[1]

The first thing that one notices when studying Kazantzakis is his passion for the Greek language. Kazantzakis does not simply use the language but becomes its servant and its high priest. He collects it, nurses it, cultivates it with a love and anxiety that reach the point of fanaticism, perhaps even greater than that of Palamas himself. Kazantzakis thirsts for words, which he collects passionately throughout his life and yet he never seems to have enough of them. In his effort to enrich his vocabulary not only did he personally travel all around Greece looking for new ones but he also asked his friends repeatedly to collect words for him. His need for words was such that he even resorted to coining his own.

His almost obsessive dedication to language leads him to work on all literary genres. He writes essays, novels, poetry, translations. He even writes children's books and text-books. It is as if he is constantly sharpening his tools in preparation for a major work. Furthermore, his linguistic activities are not restricted to writing; he organizes linguistic clubs, writes

---

[1] A detailed account of the formal characteristics of Kazantzakis's language can be found in Andriotis 1959 and Tsopanakis 1977.

dictionaries and even gets involved with the educational system as an active participant of the educational reforms of 1917.

His intense intellectual and emotional involvement with the Greek language is characteristically expressed in his autobiography *Αναφορά στον Γκρέκο*, where he likens the demotic Greek language to his fatherland (*πατρίδα*). It seems that Greek words have also become his social environment, since he sees in them both good friends and enemies. In spite of his love for words he is often frustrated when he finds them too poor and too weak to express the intensity of his agony and his vision, and he then refers to them as prisons which denigrate his dream:

> Το όνειρο δεν ήθελα να το δω να φυλακίζεται και να εξευτελίζεται μέσα στη λέξη.
>
> (*Αναφορά στον Γκρέκο*)

This frustration must spur him on to work on the language with the urgency of somebody who has a major artistic inspiration and desperately needs the material which will express it accurately and in an aesthetically satisfying way.

On the other hand, sometimes he views words as all-powerful spells (*ξόρκια*) which can ward off temptation, or as fishing-nets and weapons which constrain and tame the awful truth of the abyss by making it more familiar and accessible.

The above observations indicate how much importance Kazantzakis attributed to language. For this reason I think that by examining the most striking characteristics of his idiom we will be better able to appreciate his personality, his beliefs and his vision.

The basic characteristics of Kazantzakis's language during his mature years, which are present most strikingly in the *Οδύσσεια*, are as follows:

(1) extreme demoticism influenced by the Cretan dialect;
(2) very rich vocabulary;
(3) love for complex words (compounds);
(4) a wealth of adjectives;
(5) exaggeration, excess.

Let us examine these characteristics, starting from his demoticism, which is of primary importance.

Apart form one or two early works, such as *Όφις και κρίνο* and translations like *Τάδε έφη Ζαρατούστρας*, which were written in *katharevousa*, and two novels written in French (*Toda Raba*, and *Mon Père*), Kazantzakis wrote all the rest of his work in demotic. Indeed, what he himself considers as his *magnum opus*, the *Οδύσσεια*, is characterized by an extreme, almost fanatical and self-conscious demoticism, while in his novels, which form the major output of his later years, the language remains clearly demotic but noticeably less extreme and less self-conscious.

Nowadays, with the official recognition of demotic and its establishment in all types of discourse, Kazantzakis's demoticism does not impress us in the same way that it must have impressed the Greeks of sixty years ago. During the early years of Kazantzakis's career, Greece was divided into two fiercely hostile linguistic camps, one advocating demotic and the other supporting *katharevousa*. The movement for literary demoticism in which Solomos had played a leading role had weakened and been abandoned by many writers, but towards the end of the nineteenth century it had been revived by the strong personalities of Psycharis and Palamas. As a result, when Kazantzakis embarked on his literary career the New School (Νέα Σχολή), with Palamas as its leader, had already made great progress in the promotion and cultivation of demotic. But even then, the success of demotic was restricted to poetry while in other types of literary discourse, such as the novel, *katharevousa* remained the predominant language, with the two most important prose authors of the time, Papadiamantis and Roidis, both writing in *katharevousa*. In such an intellectual context Kazantzakis's decision to write in demotic was both difficult and daring. If we take into consideration the fact that Kazantzakis had already written successful works in *katharevousa*, we must conclude that his decision to abandon *katharevousa* completely and to take up demotic was a most significant step in his career.

Let us consider some of the reasons which may have combined to lead Kazantzakis to the rejection of *katharevousa* in favour of demotic.

1. One of the reasons for Kazantzakis's embracing of demotic, suggested by Bien (1972), must have to do with the influence of Palamas. Kazantzakis was very impressed by Palamas, who was the most widely recognized and most respected literary figure of his time. It was therefore inevitable that Kazantzakis, who was very ambitious from an early age, would aspire to achieve comparable or indeed greater success. It seems that Palamas expressed his liking for the young Kazantzakis and praised Kazantzakis's early work *Όφις και κρίνο*. Such praise from Palamas must have flattered Kazantzakis and must have made him more susceptible to Palamas's influence. In addition, Palamas was the most important figure in the New School of Athens, which constituted the progressive circle of literary personalities, and Kazantzakis with his Cretan liberal tradition was more likely to wish to align himself with a progressive movement.

2. The other two most important literary figures of that time, Papadiamantis and Roidis, were in spirit demoticists, in spite of the fact that they wrote in *katharevousa*. Papadiamantis, whose characters are common peasant folk, wrote the dialogues within his stories in a dialectal demotic, and Roidis clearly denounces *katharevousa* in his linguistic treatise *Τα Ειδωλα* (1893), where he advances sophisticated linguistic arguments offering further support for Psycharis's position on demotic; Roidis expresses his regret that because he was never taught demotic he cannot use it in his own writings. Kazantzakis could therefore find encouragement for espousing demotic in these two successful authors in spite of their own *katharevousa* practice.

3. Psycharis himself, who presented the scientific argument in favour of demotic, must have had a significant influence on Kazantzakis. Kazantzakis adopts Psycharis's support for a pan-hellenic demotic that would embrace all the linguistic elements from all parts of Greece. Psycharis's own book *Το Ταξίδι μου*, published in 1888, provided one of the first modern examples of demotic prose and the success that it had and even the controversy that it caused among the progressive intellectual circles must have further encouraged Kazantzakis to choose the

demotic. After all, Kazantzakis was after both success and controversy.

4. Another factor encouraging the use of demotic was to be found in the general intellectual climate of Europe at that time. The philosophical ideals of the European Enlightenment and Romanticism which Kazantzakis must have been exposed to during his studies in Germany and France, and which influenced him a great deal, also give support to the ideas of freedom of will and of the vital force (*élan vital*) of the common people and therefore of their language.

5. From the way Kazantzakis speaks about the *Οδύσσεια* we can see that his highest ambition is to become a great poet. He characterizes the *Οδύσσεια* as his main work, "το κατ' εξοχήν έργον", while his novels are referred to by him as minor, secondary works, as "πάρεργα" (Prevelakis 1958: 278). He considers epic poetry to be the highest literary genre and his models are Homer and Dante, in that order. It is very clear from early on that Kazantzakis aims to become Greece's Dante and in order to achieve this he has to write an epic poem equal to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. Such an epic would have to be written in a demotic local dialect comparable to the Tuscan dialect used by Dante after he had rejected Latin. Kazantzakis believed that by adopting the living language of his birth-place, the Cretan demotic, he too would be able to make a double contribution to his country by giving it a very important philosophical and poetic work and at the same time a living, fresh and powerful language which he himself will have cultivated. From such a work and such a language Kazantzakis hoped that a new Greek civilization would be born and that he would be its prophet.

Bien (1972) observes that Kazantzakis's demoticism passed through three stages which correspond to the development of his art and his philosophy. Let us consider these stages as outlined by Bien.

During the first stage (1902-1909) Kazantzakis is not yet a mature author. His ideas, as presented in his first works *Όφις και κρίνο* (1902) and *Ξημερώνει* (1907), show a strong influence of Western European ideas. At this time Kazantzakis's language is

demotic but it still contains a lot of *katharevousa* elements, e.g.: Από τα χείλη σου στάσσει ίμερος (*Όφις και κρίνο*, p. 17), Έλα να σπεύσομεν αφού θα πεθάνομεν (ibid., p. 71).

During the first decade of the second stage of Kazantzakis's development (1910-1920) his ideas continue to be foreign but his subjects and his heroes begin to become Greek: *Πρωτομάστορας, Χριστός, Νικηφόρος Φωκάς, Οδυσσέας*. Sikelianos's influence on Kazantzakis is clearly visible in these works. During this time, when Kazantzakis turns his attention to Greek themes, his language becomes more decisively demotic:

> Εγώ κάτι άλλο θέλω, εγώ πνίγομαι στην αγκαλιά σου, εγώ θέλω να βγω όξω στο φως (*Broken souls*, quoted in Bien 1972: 159).

This stage in Kazantzakis's development, as Bien observes, is characterized above all by a tremendous activity directed towards the cultivation and promotion of demotic both as a language and as an ideal. Kazantzakis has embraced Psycharis's message and has decided to support a pure panhellenic demotic language, one that would contain the lexical wealth of Greece from all local dialects. In 1909 he associates himself with the proponents of extreme demotic known as "οι μαλλιαροί"("the hairy ones"), and becomes the president of the *Solomos* society in Iraklion, the aim of which is the promotion of demotic. In his speech as president of this society he condemns *katharevousa* and declares that the language of all written discourse must have as its basis the living spoken language. He was strongly criticized for this speech not only by the supporters of *katharevousa* but also by many demoticists, who found his views rather extreme and probably threatening. But Kazantzakis responded to this criticism with characteristic pride by saying, "I was laughed at by 25,000 people and I laughed back at 25,000." Also during this period, along with Fotiadis, Glinos, Delmouzos and Triantafyllidis, Kazantzakis participated in the creation of the Educational Association, whose purpose was to promote demotic in education. In 1917 they succeeded in persuading Venizelos's government to introduce demotic into the first four years of primary school. Also during this period,

together with his wife Galateia, Kazantzakis wrote school books and translated foreign books for children.

These passionate educational activities lasted thirty whole years. Bien (1972), commenting on Kazantzakis's work during this period, agrees with Prevelakis (1958), who observed that in spite of these linguistic activities to promote demotic, Kazantzakis continued to express foreign ideas and that even this extreme demoticism was inspired, to a large extent, by the aristocratic nationalism of Ion Dragoumis, which had its origins in the West. In support of this view Prevelakis and Bien offer Kazantzakis's repeated criticism of the Greek people, whom he calls "ραγιάδες" (slaves) and to whom he attributes laziness and "καφενειακή μακαριότητα" (Bien 1972: 171).

During the second part of this period (1920-40), again according to Bien, Kazantzakis's vision of a Greek national rebirth suffered a grave blow with the assassination of Dragoumis and Venizelos's fall from office. Kazantzakis, full of disappointment and bitterness, abandoned Greece and exiled himself to Paris and Vienna. He embraced communism, an ideology which also offered support to his demoticism by its emphasis on the value and the rights of the common people, but soon rejected it and moved to a new phase during which his demoticism was no longer supported by either the nationalistic ideals of Dragoumis or communism. Thus, for the first time Kazantzakis's passion for demotic became independent of any other ideology, as Bien observes. Despite this lack of any philosophical or political basis, Kazantzakis's demoticism, instead of weakening, became even more extreme and more intransigent. This fanaticism provoked criticism even from demoticists, but without any effect on Kazantzakis, who remained firmly and uncompromisingly committed to demotic.

The most characteristic work of this period is the *Οδύσσεια*, a very impressive epic poem with a clear philosophical purpose. It is written in a rich demotic language with strong influence from the dialects, especially the Cretan dialect. Bien and Prevelakis are again in agreement in the observation that, in spite of the linguistic intensity of this work, Kazantzakis has not yet completely captured the soul and the spirit of the Greek people. The language may be that of the common people of Greece, but the ideas continue to be foreign and aristocratic.

Kazantzakis's demoticism has not yet found its natural context. Prevelakis (1958: 70) says:

> [...] ίσαμε την ώρα τουλάχιστον που γίνεται μυθιστοριογράφος – ελευθερώνει με την ποίησή του «ιδέες του πνεύματος» και όχι «ιδέες του αίματος». Οι ρίζες του δεν τον κάνουν να πονεί.
>
> Until the time at least when he becomes a novelist he releases through his poetry ideas of the intellect and not of the blood. His roots do not make him ache (my translation).

Furthermore Bien finds that demotic is ill-suited to the high philosophical aims of the work and that for these reasons the *Οδύσσεια* failed. We will return to these two points later on.

During the third and final stage of his development (1940-57) Kazantzakis, in collaboration with Yannis Kakridis, worked on the translation of the *Iliad* and at the same time wrote his more mature and most successful novels. In these novels, Bien comments, the language is a mature and strong demotic but without the extremes and the excesses of the language we find in the *Οδύσσεια*. In his most successful novels, *Βίος και πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά*, *Ο Καπετάν Μιχάλης*, and *Ο Χριστός ξανασταυρώνεται*, Kazantzakis seems to have finally come close to the common Greek people in both his language and his themes and ideas. Thus language and content are now in total harmony.

The above analysis of Kazantzakis's linguistic and intellectual development is that given by Bien and by Prevelakis, and it is convincing to a large extent. However, I would like to express some reservations which concern two of the points made about the most crucial second stage of Kazantzakis's fanatical demoticism and more specifically about the *Οδύσσεια*.

Firstly, I would like to add that Kazantzakis's linguistic passion during the second period, which follows Dragoumis's assassination and Venizelos's fall from power, may also be partially explained by Kazantzakis's personality and his Cretan *γινάτι* or "spite", which he himself encapsulates in the Cretan saying, "όπου αστοχήσεις γύρισε κι όπου πετύχεις φεύγα" ("where you have failed there you must return, where you have succeeded you should move away").

We saw that during this period Kazantzakis was severely criticized for his language (e.g. Lambridi 1939), but the stronger the criticism the more extreme his language became. In response to the attacks he received he became more determined to succeed and with his success to take revenge against both the conservative and reactionary narrow-minded *katharevousa* supporters and the moderate, sensible and lukewarm demoticists. Moderation in language is as abhorrent to Kazantzakis as *katharevousa* itself.

Another factor which leads Kazantzakis to his linguistic extremes derives directly from the demands of the work which he is trying to create. On this point, I take issue with Bien, who finds the language of the *Οδύσσεια* inappropriate to its purpose.

The *Οδύσσεια*, as Prevelakis observes, constitutes a superhuman attempt to express his vast experience:

> Η υπεράνθρωπη επιχείρηση ν' αξιοποιηθεί και ταξινομηθεί η απέραντη πνευματική πείρα του Καζαντζάκη είναι η *Οδύσσεια* (Prevelakis 1958: 49).

This explains both its length (33,333 seventeen-syllable lines) and its lexical wealth. In the *Οδύσσεια* we find descriptions of large numbers of myths, habits, social customs, beliefs, etc., which would have been impossible to express without rich linguistic material. In fact, in spite of the large number of words that Kazantzakis had collected and made up himself he was still not satisfied. It must also be stressed that the words he wanted to employ had to be derived from the living language, as used by the people of the various regions of Greece; words which refer to and describe concrete objects and concrete feelings, because Kazantzakis believed that his philosophical ideas would become more easily accessible if they were presented through specific concrete descriptions of things which one can see, hear, smell, touch, etc., and not through abstract symbols.

> Να λες τα πιο αφηρημένα πράματα με τον πιο συγκεκριμένο κι αιματηρό τρόπο [...]. Καμιά περιγραφή· όλα τα προβλήματα μεταφερμένα στο συναίσθημα, ίσαμε το πάθος (Prevelakis 1958: 80).

Thus, if what Kazantzakis wanted to communicate was a vast experience he obviously required a vast vocabulary which he could only find by combining all the resources of Greece plus whatever he himself could create. Besides, if all this experience needed to be expressed through concrete sensual pictures, as was his intention, it was absolutely necessary that he should resort to the concrete descriptions of the common life of fishermen and peasants.

We may therefore say that Kazantzakis's philosophical position of ultimate denial in combination with his artistic sensitivity led him to push language to its limits. Thus, unlike Bien, I see no disharmony between Kazantzakis's philosophy and his language in the *Οδύσσεια*. On the contrary, Kazantzakis's linguistic extremes are in tune with the extreme agony which accompanies his message, the realization of the fall of the gods and the loss of hope.

Another reason for the linguistic extremes in the *Οδύσσεια* may be his nostalgia for Greece. Remember that he is writing this work while in exile in Europe, and feeling rejected and hurt by his compatriots and critics. As he himself admits:

> Η δημοτική γλώσσα είναι η πατρίδα μας! [...] Μονάχα όποιος αγαπάει τη δημοτική μας γλώσσα με τόσο πάθος, νιώθει πως δεν πειράζει [...] που παλεύει χωρίς βοήθεια μέσα στην αμάθεια, την τεμπελιά, και την αδιαφορία της ράτσας του (quoted in Prevelakis 1958: 191).
>
> The demotic language is our fatherland, only he who loves our demotic language with such passion feels that it does not matter [...] that he is fighting without help within the ignorance, the idleness and the indifference of his race (my translation).

The connection between language and fatherland is not new in Kazantzakis. It was used by the European Enlightenment (Herder at the end of nineteenth century) and later by European Romanticism (Humboldt at the beginning of the twentieth century), and when the Ottoman empire was being dissolved and the need arose for criteria on the basis of which the boundaries of the new nation states could be defined, it was proposed that the natural borders of a free state must be determined in terms of

linguistic boundaries, as far as this was possible. In the context of Greek literature Solomos uses the formula fatherland=language when he stresses that for a nation to survive it needs to cultivate and to strengthen its national identity, and that this is achieved with the cultivation of its tradition and its language. Now since nation equals the common people who fought for this nation, Solomos draws the conclusion that the language of the Greek nation should be the language of the Greek people, i.e. demotic.

Psycharis and also Palamas later on repeat this and so does Kazantzakis. But in Kazantzakis the connection between language and homeland acquires a new dimension. For Kazantzakis during his self-imposed exile in Paris and Vienna, demotic becomes a substitute for fatherland. Inside demotic he finds stored the whole experience and wisdom of his race and this experience and wisdom is an indispensable element for his own emotional and intellectual cultivation. I would suggest, therefore, that the linguistic activities and the extreme demotic language in the *Οδύσσεια* derive not only from Kazantzakis's intellectual and artistic needs but also from his personal human needs. If various reasons forced him to be physically absent from Greece he would try to bring everything that is Greek close to him through the linguistic wealth collected from all parts of Greece.

Pursuing this point further, we may note that according to Bien and Prevelakis the *Οδύσσεια* failed because the language of the common people, the extreme demotic, was not well suited to the high philosophical ideas which it attempted to express:

> It can also be seen how colorful, evocative, and pictorial demotic expressions tend to be, and how rooted in sensual experience of everyday Greece – characteristics that, as I shall argue, perhaps made them inappropriate for the poem in which they appeared although wonderfully appropriate for the novels of Kazantzakis' final period (Bien 1972: 213).

And later on, criticizing the lack of congruence in the *Οδύσσεια* between language and content, Bien says:

> Lastly and most comprehensively, the language, though meant to be true to the spirit of the Greek people, to express what is best in

> them, is employed in a poem that has nothing essentially to do with Greece or the Greek people, but is indeed completely contrary to the spirit of Greece and was written by a man who, by his own confession, did not at that period "see, hear, or taste the world" as a Greek does. [...] in this case we discover an incongruity that erodes the aesthetic unity found in fully realized poems (ibid.: 222-3).

I would like to disagree with this position for the following reasons: firstly, we have very impressive examples, also discussed by Bien himself, of literary philosophical works from other periods of Greek history but also from different languages, which show clearly that neither idiosyncratic language nor indeed difficulty of language have prevented their success.

A striking example of this is Dante's *Divine Comedy*, an epic which expresses lofty philosophical ideas in the local dialect of Tuscany, an idiom which had not been used as a written language before and which was unfamiliar to the rest of the Italians. Another example is the Homeric epic, whose language is a combination of various Greek dialects. Milton resorted to an archaic and rather difficult language while James Joyce went so far as to break the rules of grammar.

All these examples show that neither idiosyncratic nor difficult language necessarily prevents the success of a literary work. In addition, we can see that in some cases when an author wants to express new and original philosophical ideas he often finds the common language poor and worn-out and therefore inappropriate for his aims. For the poet-philosopher, new ideas and new messages constitute revelations intending to overthrow the current wisdom and to introduce new values. It is for this reason that the poet-philosopher requires new, fresh, and vivid linguistic material. With such new and unexpected language he will surprise his reader and will make him or her more alert and more attentive. Thus, new and sometimes revolutionary ideas are expressed not only through the meaning of the words used but also through the form of the language itself. In such works the words are not only conventional vehicles of meaning but also symbols of that meaning.

If we look at the language of the *Οδύσσεια* from this perspective we can conclude that the Cretan demotic was in fact

the one best suited to Kazantzakis's purpose because it was as vivid and as fresh as his ideas. In addition, the Cretan demotic offered Kazantzakis another advantage. Not being an established written medium, it did not afford words for abstract ideas and therefore these ideas had to be presented via words for concrete objects and concrete experiences used as metaphors. In this way the philosophical messages would, in the first instance, be felt as experiences of the senses, which is precisely what Kazantzakis wanted to achieve.

There is another point in Bien's evaluation of the *Οδύσσεια* with which I cannot fully agree. Bien observes that the subjects or themes in the *Οδύσσεια*, pessimism, nihilism and Buddhism, are not Greek but foreign imports, whereas the themes of the novels are indeed Greek. My view is that already in the *Οδύσσεια* and perhaps even earlier Kazantzakis had conceived what he himself refers to as "the Cretan glance", which constitutes the filter through which he will interpret Western pessimism and turn it into a Greek and indeed Cretan stance of "heroic pessimism". Let us examine this point a little more closely.

The central message in the *Οδύσσεια* is the same as the one which we find in the novels. Indeed, we may safely say that all of Kazantzakis's heroes – from the time of the *Οδύσσεια*, and perhaps even before, up to the novels – are extensions and variations of his central character, Odysseus, and that the philosophy of the *Οδύσσεια* may be summarized by what he himself gives as the main message:

(i) Good and evil are enemies.
(ii) Good and evil cooperate (the yin and yan of eastern philosophy).
(iii) Good and evil are one and the same thing.
(iv) Even this one thing does not exist.

In view of the pessimism expressed in the above it is natural to ask: What is the use of the heroism with which Kazantzakis insists on combining it? It must be pointed out that Kazantzakis's heroism is not the seeking of death, as the nihilist Schopenhauer suggests, nor is it the same as the passive patience and acceptance of the Buddhists. Kazantzakis's heroism is some-

thing different. Kazantzakis's hero in fact sees the abyss very clearly but he views it as a new challenge for his fighting spirit, a spirit which, I would suggest, is imbued with a specifically Cretan idea of freedom. I believe that Kazantzakis's originality and his Greekness reside precisely in this.

The heroes of Crete, Daskalogiannis, Saint Minas, etc., fight against the enemy, the Turks, in spite of the realization that they will be defeated. Yet they fight because they consider freedom to be the ultimate good. But what kind of freedom can one expect from a fight that is doomed to failure without any hope of ever overthrowing the enemy? Kazantzakis, having been brought up in Crete listening to stories of these heroic and futile battles of the Cretan heroes, seems to have arrived at the following view:

Freedom is the ultimate good.
When you cease to fight for freedom you have given up and you have accepted your slavery.
As long as you continue the fight, the vision of freedom is kept alive.

Therefore freedom in such a context is not necessarily equated with victory, since victory itself may lead to acquiescence and weakness which are another kind of slavery. Freedom is thus to be seen as alertness and the constant resistance to all powers which try to enslave us. The ultimate enemies are on the one hand the hope of actually achieving freedom and on the other the fear of non-existence. The behaviour of the Cretans at Arkadi is a powerful example of people who dared to look death in the face with a steady and cool eye (the Cretan glance), without hope and without fear.

Kazantzakis seems to have admired this kind of heroism of the ideal Cretan fighter, and Arkadi must therefore have become the clearest symbol of Kazantzakis's version of heroic pessimism. Furthermore we may suppose that he appreciated that the degree of one's heroism depends on the intensity with which one is able to enjoy to the full the earthly pleasures which one is prepared to sacrifice for freedom. The more one loves the beauty and the pleasures of life the more frightening the reality of the abyss must be. This, in turn, will increase the

taste of freedom for the hero who is prepared to accept that nothing exists. Thus the superman is not he who merely contemplates the abyss and is ready to accept it, but rather he who has the keenness of the senses with which to enjoy to the full the pleasures of the body and of the spirit and yet is able to peer fearlessly into the abyss.

This Cretan-Greek interpretation of heroic pessimism justifies, in Kazantzakis's work, the love of life and of the world both of the senses and of the intellect. Thus Kazantzakis, by filtering Western philosophy through Cretan ideas, has managed to change it from a total negation to a strong affirmation of life.

> Καλό κι αληθινό 'ναι το ψωμί και το νερό κι ο αγέρας,
> μπαίνουν βαθιά στα σωθικά του αντρούς και τον
> κορμοψυχώνουν (*Οδύσσεια* Ω 977-8).

Kazantzakis's philosophy may indeed have its origins in western forms of pessimism, but its version of heroism already exists in Cretan history and lore, and it is this particular ingredient of the fight for freedom which Kazantzakis embodies in Odysseus as indeed he does in all his other heroes in the novels.

Let us return to the language of the *Οδύσσεια*. Given the interpretation of its philosophy, as we have analyzed it, we see that it would be completely inappropriate for Kazantzakis to describe the lust for life and the bravery of his heroes and to make these descriptions believable, in any other language than that of the simple Cretans. Only then could the physical and intellectual context, as well as the experience which gave rise to this particular wisdom, come alive and ring true. I conclude, therefore, that the *Οδύσσεια* represents, both in terms of philosophical themes and in terms of language, the Greek and indeed the Cretan filter which determined Kazantzakis's own interpretation of heroic pessimism. In fact I want to go a step further and suggest that Kazantzakis arrived at his own original view precisely through his intense dedication to the demotic language. His linguistic zeal in collecting words, writing dictionaries, translating, etc., was the preparation of his tools but also the cultivation of his sensitivity to the ancestral voices.

The demotic language is Kazantzakis's Beatrice since it ultimately became his teacher and his guide, because it is through the language that Kazantzakis approached his own roots and recognized in them the wisdom of his race.

I have devoted some space to the presentation and justification of the first characteristic of Kazantzakis's language, namely his demoticism and especially the language of the *Οδύσσεια*, because I feel that this linguistic zeal for the demotic is of fundamental importance in our appreciation of his art and his ideas. Prevelakis and Bien may be right in their assessment that the *Οδύσσεια* failed but I do not think that this is due either to the themes or to the choice of language. As a plan it has both the right themes and the right choice of linguistic medium for the time and place and the purpose for which it was written. If it has failed, I would see its shortcomings as the following:

(1) The work is too rich both linguistically and thematically. This makes it too difficult not only because of the demotic words but also because of the long lines, the complex words etc., all of which act as stumbling blocks to the smooth and simultaneous assimilation of rhythm and meaning.
(2) The general intellectual climate of the modern era in which it appeared no longer provides us with the conditions or allows us the leisure for reading long epic poetry.
(3) The reader may be put off by the self-consciousness of Kazantzakis the artist who is also a linguistic propagandist.

Bien (1972) proceeds with his analysis of Kazantzakis's language by examining the output of his final period (1940-57), which includes the translation of the *Iliad* and the novels, and his assessment is that here Kazantzakis has finally achieved the desired congruence between the language and the themes presented:

> The novels succeed because their language is joined to vision and is therefore no longer arbitrarily imposed [...] Nor is it coupled by violence with high poetic style or with abstract philosophical concerns, as it was in the *Odyssey* (Bien 1973: 256).

I would propose instead that in the novels the themes remain the same as those of the *Οδύσσεια* but there is a shift in the emphasis given to the two sides of the heroic pessimism. In the novels the heroism, whose characterization, as we have argued, contains as a necessary element the love of life, is more foregrounded, while in the *Οδύσσεια* the main emphasis is given to the pessimistic aspect. This more centrally presented love for life, compassion and heroism makes the novels much more representative of the Greek way of life and thus more recognizable as true. As far as the language is concerned it is still the Cretan demotic but here, in prose, Kazantzakis has the space to express himself more naturally and the reader is given the time to absorb both the poetry and the meaning in a less difficult way. Moreover, by the time the novels appear the public must have become more adjusted both to the demotic and to the form of the novel. We may venture to say that the novel by then, not only in Greece but in other cultures of the West too, seems to have supplanted the epic. Craig Raine, in a recent (1996) interview in *The Guardian*, says: "The epic poem has a lot of common features with the novel and surely the biggest epic of the 20th century is James Joyce's *Ulysses*."

We may now proceed to examine the remaining characteristics of Kazantzakis's language.

We have listed as the second important characteristic of Kazantzakis's language his extremely rich vocabulary. His passion for words expressed itself very early on in his life. As a pupil at secondary school in Naxos he tried to translate a French dictionary into Greek. His sister-in-law Elli Alexiou tells us that she remembers him bent over his desk collecting and recording new words, names of birds and plants, cries of animals etc. In his correspondence with Prevelakis he asks him to provide him with new words for animals and plants and for exorcisms and curses. He says he wants to tour Greece in order to steal like a pirate ("*να κουρσέψει*") words from every part of Greece. In collaboration with Prevelakis he undertakes to write a French dictionary with *katharevousa* and demotic translations (whereas Kazantzakis finished his part, Prevelakis never did finish his). Kazantzakis also attempted to write a French-Greek dictionary in collaboration with the French linguist André

Mirambel. In his autobiography Kazantzakis comments on the power of words as follows:

> Κάθε λέξη είναι σκληρότατο τσόφλι, που κλείνει μέσα του μεγάλη εκρηχτική δύναμη· για να βρεις τι θέλει να πει πρέπει να την αφήσεις να σκάζει σαν οβίδα μέσα σου και λευτερώνεις έτσι την ψυχή που φυλακίζει.
>
> Every word is a very hard shell which contains a great explosive power; in order to find what it means you must let it explode like a bomb inside you so that it will release the soul that it hides.
>
> (*Αναφορά στον Γκρέκο* p. 103)

And again: "Οι λέξεις δεν είναι ούτε οι αδελφοί ούτε οι γιοι παρά οι πατέρες των αισθητών πραγμάτων" ("Words are neither the brothers nor the sons but the fathers of perceptible things") (Prevelakis 1958: 72).

It is easy to appreciate this passion of Kazantzakis's, or any other author's, for words if we consider the role that words play in our life and our civilization. With words we analyse the world around us and make it familiar and approachable. The things, whether concrete or abstract, which exist within language have become ours since we have classified them by placing them in a network of relationships with other objects. This is very clearly appreciated by Kazantzakis, as we see in *Βίος και πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά*. When the boss hears Zorbas calling him a "bookworm" he replies:

> I was pleased knowing now the name of my misery, I could more easily perhaps defeat it. As if it were no longer diffuse, bodiless and unreachable.

Words show the distinctions that the mind makes between physical, intellectual and artistic experience, and the more complex the experience that needs to be described, the richer the vocabulary needed. We must not forget that Kazantzakis wanted to express this rich experience and his complex philosophical ideas through the reader's feelings, through concrete experiences communicated with vivid sensual descriptions. The rich vocabulary is taken from the language of the common people

because it is fresh and because it retains its connection with physical objects. Here are some examples from the *Οδύσσεια*: ο νους ξαστέρωνε, η καρδιά γλύκανε, ο θάνατος θερίζει νιούς, η γη είναι σγουρό σταφύλι, ο σκληρός λόγος κουφοδρομούσε μέσα μου, οι θύμησες ξεκίνησαν και σπρώχνει η μια την άλλη και βιάζονται.

The third characteristic of Kazantzakis's language is his love of compound words. He is not satisfied with the tremendous wealth of the words that he has collected from all over Greece but wants to extend this treasure with compound words which he coins himself. With these compounds he tries to convey the complex and multifaceted character of his ideas or to combine and bind together conflicting ideas in a single linguistic form, to reconcile the irreconcilable. Again, this can be illustrated with examples from the *Οδύσσεια*: ζερβοδεξοχέρης, θεοφονιάς, ουρανομπαίχτης, ουρανοθάλασσο, αντρογυνοχωρίστρα, νεφροκαρδιογνώστης, λοξονούσης. In the use of such compounds Kazantzakis follows a long Greek tradition from Homer to *Erotokritos*.

The fourth characteristic of Kazantzakis's language is, as we have already mentioned, the rich use of adjectives. He will rarely leave a noun without an adjective to modify it. More often he will modify his nouns with two or more epithets, many of which are compounds: τους σαραντάπηχους αγέρικους αρχόντους; οι λιγερές σπαθάτες χουρμαδιές; αντάρτισα καρδιά του ανεμοσκούφη ανθρώπου (from the *Οδύσσεια*). Kazantzakis himself tells us that he loves adjectives not only as decorative elements but as essential tools which allow him to express his emotions in a global way, from many sides, because, as he claims, the emotion is never simply either positive or negative but both at the same time.

> Τίποτα δεν υφίσταται τόσο ουσιαστικά όσο το επίθετο. Για να μη χαθεί η ουσία πρέπει να εκφράσουμε τις συνυπάρχουσες ιδιότητες.
>
> (*Αναφορά στον Γκρέκο*)

We must point out that the same noun appears with a variety of adjectives within the same work, as if it is developing and changing in nature. Prevelakis has counted the adjectives Kazantzakis uses to describe Odysseus and has found there to be

more than 200. Some of these are: αγριοσκουφάτος, αετογοργομάτης, ανέλπιδος, ουρανομπαίχτης, μονιάς, θεοφονιάς, δαιμονόδαρτος. This wealth of adjectives and compounds is further enriched by an impressive use of metaphors and similes.

A more general characteristic of Kazantzakis's language is its excesses: Τα πάντα εις άγαν. He refuses to restrict himself to the moderate demotic of Palamas but tries to cultivate a panhellenic demotic with a strong Cretan influence. The fifteen-syllable line cannot accommodate his poetry; he has to stretch it to a seventeen-syllable one. Existing words seem to him too few and limited; he extends them by making his own words, more complex in form and meaning. To make his text more noticeable he simplifies the accentual system and thus becomes one of the pioneers of the monotonic system. This simplified accentual system and some orthographic changes which appeared in the pre-final versions of the poem caused a great deal of negative reaction and Kazantzakis was forced to return to a more acceptable traditional orthography in the final version. His poem has to be the longest ever in Greek literature with the magic number of 33,333 lines. He finds it impossible to restrict himself to one literary genre so he attempts them all: poetry, essays, theatre, translations, text-books, travelogues, dictionaries and novels.

In view of Kazantzakis's predeliction for extremes we may want to pose the question whether his linguistic intensity and excess has damaged or benefited his art. I think such a question is very difficult to answer. Did the excessively elongated limbs in El Greco's paintings contribute positively or negatively to his art? A work of art should be judged in its totality and by the degree to which it moves us and whether through our contact with it we are made to see some new truths.

> The taste of the apple (states Berkeley) lies in the contact of the fruit with the palate, not in the fruit itself; in a similar way (I would say) poetry lies in the meeting of poem and reader not in the lines of symbols printed on pages of a book. What is essential is the thrill, the almost physical emotion that comes with each reading.
>
> (Jorge Luis Borges, cited in Heaney 1995)

What we can perhaps say in conclusion is that Kazantzakis, endowed with a restless, childlike, daring and totally honest mind, tried to explore tirelessly all the possibilities open to him. In this search he immersed himself in his Cretan tradition and his Cretan language with impressive results. His extreme dedication to his own language and culture ultimately rewarded both him and us.

References

Andriotis, Nikolaos (1959). "Η γλώσσα του Καζαντζάκη", *Νέα Εστία* (Christmas edition) 90-5

Bien, Peter (1972). *Kazantzakis and the Linguistic Revolution in Greek Literature.* Princeton

Heaney Seamus (1995). "Redress for the 'Honey of Roses'", *The Guardian* (5 October)

Lambridi, Elli (1939). "Η Οδύσσεια του Ν. Καζαντζάκη. ΙΙΙ. Η μορφή της", *Νεοελληνικά Γράμματα* (15 April) 10-11

Prevelakis, Pandelis (1958). *Ο Ποιητής και το ποίημα της Οδύσσειας*. Athens

Tsopanakis, Agapitos (1977). "Η γλώσσα και το λεξιλόγιο του Ν. Καζαντζάκη", *Νέα Εστία* (Christmas edition) 65-73

University of Reading

Greek music in the twentieth century: a European dimension

Guy Protheroe

In the musical life of Greece at the present time two parallel traditions are evolving. One is the modern development of folk traditions, which in its most basic form, artistically, is heard in *bouzouki* music, although there is also a higher level, artistically, in *tragoudi*; this is essentially the eastern tradition in Greek music, which remains popular in Greece. The other tradition is the music written under western influence, which began some two hundred years ago. After a brief historical review, this article concentrates mainly on the western tradition, both in "classical" and popular music, in which fields a number of Greek musicians have become internationally famous.[1]

Documentation on the beginnings of Greek music dates from classical times. Music appears to have reached its artistic climax in the period 700-400 BC, when it played an important part in nearly all occasions in Greek life. Very little of the actual music has survived – just a few fragments – and the interpretation of the notation has been the subject of considerable research and speculation over the last century. There have been many reconstructive performances of ancient Greek music in recent years, but there is little in the way of agreement amongst scholars as to the authenticity of any such performances.

Despite the paucity of surviving notation, there are many descriptions and discussions surviving from classical times about the philosophy and theory of music, especially in the writings of Pythagoras, Ptolemy and Aristoxenus. The interpretations of these tracts in the Middle Ages, though not based on knowledge of the actual music which they described, gave rise to the

---

[1] A bibliographical note listing some basic secondary reading on the history of music in Greece can be found at the end of this article.

systems of church modes which dominated ecclesiastical and art music for centuries.

The ancient theories certainly had a strong influence on the tradition in Greek music which has the longest pedigree: the music of the Byzantine church; but it is likely that the ancient Greek music itself has been preserved to some degree in Byzantine chant. There is notation of Byzantine music dating back to the ninth century; from the twelfth century the notation is very detailed, and we can be fairly confident about the accuracy of modern transcriptions. The first centres of Byzantine music seem to have been Antioch and Palestine, and the roots of the music can be traced to eastern origins such as Syria; there is also considerable current research into connections between Byzantine chant and the chants of the ancient Jews. Indeed the Byzantine musical tradition has continued virtually unbroken for the last 1,500 years, and it is still of great importance in the living music of Greece today.

The other continuous tradition is that of folk music. However, until very recent times no folk music was recorded or notated, so it is very difficult to know exactly what it was like in earlier centuries. There is one exception, in that a few Greek folk songs have been found notated in manuscripts on Mount Athos – presumably they were favourite songs of the monks whose job it was to notate the liturgical music. We know, however, that the folk music has roots dating back to classical times, and also in the music of the Byzantine church: some of the folk-dance types, and their rhythms, have a classical origin, while certain modes and melodic patterns are derived from ecclesiastical music.

As any visitor to Greece will be aware, the folk music tradition is still very much alive. Some of its survival is inevitably through something of a "museum" culture, though it is a much more living tradition than in most Western European countries. And the folk traditions are also remarkably varied – from the ancient polyphonic tradition from Epirus in the West, the Pontic music in the East, to the Cretan music in the South. It is the folk music of Crete which is the most popular music with the British.

European music first became widely known in Greece in the nineteenth century, after the War of Independence; but there had

already been a strong European influence prior to that, from about 1770, in the Ionian Islands, which were never under Ottoman domination. From the late fourteenth century until 1797 the Islands were ruled by the Venetians, and both the folk music and the music of the church showed the influence of cultural contact with Italy.

In this last period also, from about 1773, Italian opera companies were staging performances in the Ionian Islands. By the early nineteenth century Greek composers from the Ionian Islands were beginning to write Italian-style operas themselves, to Italian libretti, and usually performed by Italian companies.

The first of these composers to write an opera to a Greek text was Spyros Xyndas (1812-1896) with *O Ypopsifios Vouleftis* – "The candidate member of parliament" – a charming political satire. Another composer was Nikolaos Mantzaros (1795-1872), who is now remembered above all as the composer of the Greek national anthem. This was written in the late 1820s, during the War of Independence, as part of a "Hymn to Liberty", and is a setting of a poem by Dionysios Solomos consisting of 158 stanzas. Mantzaros set all the verses in a choral cantata for men's voices and piano; it is only the first eight stanzas which are set to the tune which was adopted as the national anthem in 1864, at the suggestion of King George I of the Hellenes. The style of this cantata is very definitely European: indeed, it is reminiscent of the pieces Schubert was writing in Vienna at the same time for male voices and piano.

Most of the leading composers of the Ionian school studied in Naples, and spent much time working abroad. The most notable of these was Spyridon Samaras (1861 or 1863-1917), who wrote perhaps the very first operas in the "verismo" style, predating Mascagni and Puccini; indeed he almost overshadowed them for some time in reputation, although his operas are now forgotten. He is still remembered, however, as the composer of the *Hymn for the Olympic Games*, performed at the first modern Olympic Games, held in Athens in 1896. It was adopted in 1958 as the official anthem of the Olympic Games.

Another type of music which became popular in mainland Greece late in the nineteenth century was operetta, with composers like Hadjipostolou writing in a straight Viennese style, but with a Greek libretto: the result can be rather dis-

orientating to the unprepared listener! The cities of Patras and Ermoupolis (Syros) were important musical centres in the late nineteenth century and an extensive repertoire of operatic works was performed. It is noteworthy that in the decade 1870-80 Patras had no fewer than three philharmonic orchestras (Bakounakis 1991: 27).

The foundations of a Greek tradition of what one might call "art music", in the western sense, began in the late nineteenth century, with the establishment of the Athens Conservatory and subsequently the Hellenic Conservatory and the National Conservatory. The leading figure in this nationalist movement was Manolis Kalomiris (1883-1962). He and the other composers of the group used a basically European musical style, but combined it with Greek folklore, in terms of both literary material and subject matter; they sometimes also used Greek folk music melodies and styles.

Kalomiris's training was first in Greece, then at the Vienna Conservatory in the opening years of this century, where he developed a profound admiration for Wagner. After this he spent four years in the Ukraine, working as a piano teacher, and gained an extensive knowledge of the Russian nationalist school. The fourth principal influence on his music was the movement for demotic Greek – an influence he shared with many other leading intellectuals and writers.

Kalomiris wrote five operas, which all exploited the Wagnerian principle of "unendliche Melodie" and the "leitmotif". The most popular of his operas have been *To Dakhtylidi tis Manas* ("The Mother's Ring"), based on a play by Yannis Kambysis, and *O Protomastoras* ("The Masterbuilder") based on the Kazantzakis play.

Amongst all the music Kalomiris composed, perhaps his best-known work is the First Symphony, known as *Levendia* ("Heroism"), written towards the end of the First World War and first performed in the Herodes Atticus Theatre in Athens in 1920, during the victory celebrations. Its final movement has become another Greek national hymn: a grand setting of the Byzantine hymn to the victorious Virgin Mary.

During the 1920s there were two Greek composers who made contact with contemporary music in Europe and began to express themselves in contemporary idioms. The first was Dimitri

Mitropoulos (1896-1960), who is still remembered as a famous international conductor, but is almost forgotten as a composer. His piano work *Eine Griechische Sonate* (1919) is an example of his European, post-Lisztian, style. But he was also a pioneer in compositional techniques. In 1925 he wrote a work for violin and piano called *Ostinata*, in a twelve-note idiom which predates Arnold Schoenberg's invention of the system.

It was a Greek pupil of Schoenberg who became the first major international Greek composer: Nikos Skalkottas (1904-1949). Skalkottas's style was uncompromisingly modern, mainly atonal, and largely written in twelve-note technique. This technique involves treating each semitone of the scale as of equal importance, thus avoiding the idea of major and minor keys and modes and of normal-sounding melodies and chords. Skalkottas spent the last sixteen years of his life composing prolifically, despite continuous depression and ill health; he earned his living as a back-desk orchestral violinist in Athens. Nearly fifty years after his death a large amount of his more avant-garde music still remains unperformed. Skalkottas did make some attempts, however, to establish contact with his fellow-countrymen, in a set of 36 arrangements of *Greek Dances* for orchestra, some of which have remained popular both in Greece and other countries.

Twelve-note ("serial") music was an influential style in European music from the late 1920s up to the 1960s, but more recently the style and technique have lost most of their impact and influence to more populist, "post-romantic" and "post-modern" styles, which have at last brought the output of many contemporary classical composers into the middle ground of popular interest and acclaim. With twelve-note music becoming ever more unpopular, it seems likely that much of Skalkottas's unperformed œuvre will never reach the stage or the microphone.

After the Second World War there were two parallel developments in Greek music. The "art music"' developed remarkably and very richly, and indeed it continues to do so. The other development at this time was in the folk tradition. This was not so much to do with the folk music of the countryside; it was more to do with urban folk music, and in particular *rebetiko*, sometimes referred to as "the Greek Blues". *Rebetiko* originated

with the Greeks in Asia Minor in the late nineteenth century; it was with the influx of a million and a half Greek refugees from Asia Minor in the 1920s that the music was brought to mainland Greece – especially into the vast urban expansion which took place in Athens and Salonika, where *rebetiko* became the folk music of the criminal underground and songs of protest for the downtrodden working classes.

The subject matter of the songs was hashish dens, prison, love and the futility of life, and this led to the songs being officially banned in the 1930s and 1940s. There has been a revival of this original *rebetiko* tradition since the 1970s, recreating the original gritty and pungent style of delivery and with original instruments.

In the 1950s *rebetiko* became recognised as an art form by the intellectual milieu in Greece, and much of the popular song style in Greece in the last thirty years, *tragoudi*, has developed from this tradition. The key figure in this development – indeed the father-figure above all in modern Greek music – was Manos Hadjidakis (1925-1994), who was responsible for some of the earliest concerts in Greece of the avant-garde, including expatriate composers such as Xenakis. Hadjidakis himself composed in a popular style, producing over 800 songs and more than 100 film scores. He achieved international prominence with his score to Jules Dassin's film *Never on Sunday* (1964), starring Melina Mercouri – though he claimed to object strongly to that, remarking: "There is nothing worse than success, when it comes from a source you don't esteem!"

Hadjidakis's exact contemporary, Mikis Theodorakis (b. 1925), had a similar success with his music for Michael Cacoyannis's film *Zorba the Greek* (1964); he has composed much for the western concert platform, but like Hadjidakis most of his music is in what might be described, in western terms, as somewhere between "art song" and popular song. Theodorakis has always been associated with left-wing political causes, and one of his most popular works in this vein is the cantata setting poems by the Chilean Pablo Neruda, *Canto General*, made famous by Maria Farantouri's interpretation.

Music in this tradition is at the heart of contemporary Greek popular music; the *bouzouki* tradition is a natural evolution of it, though a poor relation artistically. There are many Greek

musicians, especially singers, who travel internationally with this type of music; one of the most celebrated in Greece is George Dalaras, who is also noted as a modern performer of *rebetiko*. One of his most popular programmes is a modern revival of *Rebetiko*, in a film version by Costas Ferris (1983), with music by one of the best-known of the middle generation of Greek popular composers, Stavros Xarhakos. Dalaras has recently made a documentary about Greek music with the expatriate Greek director Costa Gavras.

Dalaras and several other Greek musicians tour a number of European countries regularly, especially England and Germany, and also parts of the United States and Australia. When Dalaras comes to London, his audience is normally composed of perhaps 80% Greek Cypriots from North-East London, perhaps 15% mainland Greeks, and at the most 5% British. Modern Greek popular music does not seem to travel so well outside the ethnic traditions. British tourists, for example, like to hear it in Greece, but not much back home.

Since this article is concerned with the European dimension of Greek music, it is not intended to be a detailed survey of those composers who, although popular in Greece and with Greeks in general, have not made a significant impact on the non-Greek world.

In fact the area of music in which Greece has made the biggest impact internationally is that of opera singers. Maria Callas of course became a legend in her own time; the leading Greek soprano now is probably Agnes Baltsa, though there are several others on the world stage, including the young mezzo-soprano Markella Hatziano, who has achieved considerable success in Europe and the USA in the last few years.

It seems a curious fact that Greece has over the past few decades produced some of the greatest female opera singers, but very few male singers of international status. The other great singing nations, such as Spain, Italy and Wales, seem to produce great male and female singers in equal quantities.

Another area in which there is a strong vein of Greek talent is that of concert pianists: there are several with major international reputations. In very recent years also there has been an exodus of many fine young Greek classical guitarists to the European capitals.

In the field of pop music, there are many groups in Greece who have tried to emulate western rock music, but with little success outside their own country, and there are only two Greek popular musicians who have achieved an international success comparable with that of the leading European and American stars.

The first is the singer Nana Mouskouri, who has managed over many years to keep an even balance between songs from her Greek heritage and the demands of the western music market. The other is a composer, Vangelis, who is known throughout Europe and (to a lesser degree) the USA as a leading popular composer, although many people do not even know that he is Greek. Indeed, with the normal American pronunciation of his name, "Van-Jelis", many people assume that he is Dutch!

Vangelis's full name is Evanghelos Papathanassiou. He spent the first twenty years of his life in Greece: he was born and educated in Volos, then he moved to Athens, where in his teens he founded a rock group, *Formyx*, in which he played keyboards and composed most of the music, largely in a European pop style.

In 1968, after the beginning of the Junta, he moved to Paris. His group at that time was called *Aphrodite's Child*, with Demis Roussos as vocalist and Lukas Sideras on drums. They enjoyed considerable success, and their records are still something of a cult – some of Vangelis's best compositions date from this period.

Vangelis went on, mainly working as a solo artist, to be one of the pioneers of the electronic music era in popular music. He is, perhaps, best known for his Oscar-winning score to *Chariots of Fire*. Most of Vangelis's famous tracks have very simple tunes, with fairly simple harmonies supporting them; the genius is in the richness of the sounds which he creates. Such scores as *Chariots of Fire* sound as though there is a large orchestra supporting the solo piano; but in fact it is all played by Vangelis: the piano, the electronic keyboards (with orchestral sounds) and the percussion.

Because he can create such rich textures all by himself, Vangelis seldom uses orchestral players. What he does use quite often, though, is singers. It is in his vocal music that he harks back most to his Greek roots, using a chorus in a ritualistic way that is reminiscent of ancient Greek drama. Vangelis's Greek

heritage is still very important to him, and at the heart of his own philosophy about music. Perhaps the record which engages most with Greek musical traditions is one he made with Irene Pappas in 1979, called *Odes*. It is a collection of folk and traditional songs several centuries old, but in modern settings by Vangelis. When it came out there were strong reactions from several scholars, who regarded these settings as a distortion of the authentic Greek heritage; despite that, the songs were highly popular with the general public in Greece.

Vangelis's most recent major success was his music for the Columbus film *1492: Conquest of Paradise* (1992). Ridley Scott's film, starring Gérard Depardieu, did not achieve great popularity, but the music has taken on a life of its own, and the theme music in particular has become something of a modern classic.

On the classical side there is also only one Greek composer who is a major international figure in our time: Iannis Xenakis (b. 1922). From his earliest days Xenakis was something of an *enfant terrible*. He studied engineering at the Athens Polytechnic during the early 1940s, but then became heavily involved in the Greek resistance against the Germans. In the civil conflict which followed the liberation he lost an eye, on 1 January 1945, after sustaining a facial injury during an attack by a British Sherman tank. He was then hunted by the Greek military police for desertion, and in 1947 managed to escape to Paris, where he has lived ever since.

In Paris he found a job in an architectural studio, working for Le Corbusier, and he was involved in several of the architect's most revolutionary designs. At the same time he was studying composing, and went to Messiaen's composition classes. In the musical theories which he developed he employed the same scientific and higher mathematical principles which he used in architecture. He himself traces his synthesis of art and science back to the Ancient Greeks. From the earliest formulations of Aristoxenus and Euclid, music and mathematics have been intimately linked. In the Middle Ages in Europe, the study of music at university automatically included the study of arithmetic, geometry, architecture and astronomy – all sciences based on numbers. Xenakis has said that he regards music as "interesting", but mathematics as "beautiful", which is very much an ancient Greek idea.

Xenakis's work with Le Corbusier was on revolutionary concepts for buildings, involving immensely complicated calculations for proportions, lines and curves of pressure. He was also working with new materials, especially with pre-stressed concrete. One result of all this was a revolutionary building to Xenakis's own design: the Philips Pavilion for the Brussels World Fair in 1958. The shell of the Pavilion was designed as a hyperbolic paraboloid, but the whole of the surface was constructed from a series of straight lines.

Xenakis applied exactly the same principles in his first major composition, *Metastaseis* for orchestra (1955). The conventional way of composing in Western music has been to start with a theme – probably a tune, or a figure or motif of a few notes or chords – and to build up a larger form by developing these elements: a microcosmic way of creating a musical structure. Xenakis instead approached the construction from the outside, using large number theories to create masses of sound in clouds and galaxies. Then he progressively defined and sub-defined his material until finally the smallest details were charted: a macrocosmic approach. This provided great confusion for his early audiences, and the first performance of *Metastaseis* created a considerable scandal.

It is possible to see, in the musical score of *Metastaseis*, how the construction of the work is exactly parallel to the plan for the Philips Pavilion: in visual terms, both the score and the plan are designed in curves which are constructed of straight lines at angles to each other. In terms of the orchestra, each one of the straight lines is given to an individual orchestral instrument, playing a glissando, and the rapid overlap and succession of these sounds creates the curve in sound, as the architectural design does in space. Xenakis normally writes his music first in the form of a graph, so that the aural structure is entirely clear visually; but in order for the performers to be able to play the music, he has then to transcribe it into conventional notation.

Xenakis's music is above all the organising of sound in space, aurally, in the same way that architecture is the organising of materials in space, visually. Xenakis has brought together the aural and the visual at various times in a series of works he calls *Polytopes*. These are pieces in which the musical and visual

aspects result from the same original calculations and they tend to be conceived on an epic scale. Several have been designed for large historic sites, such as Mycenae in Greece and Persepolis in Iran, and others have been designed for some of the most modern architectural structures. The musical source is an electronic tape, with vast numbers of speakers, and the visual component is vast numbers of light sources and lasers, all run from the same computer programme.

At Mycenae the whole landscape was used, with processions of peasants, soldiers and children, three choirs and a large orchestra, anti-aircraft projectors lighting up the surrounding mountains and clouds, cinema and slide projections on huge screens, and even a herd of hundreds of goats, each with special lamps and bells. This is the sort of spectacle more associated these days with Jean-Michel Jarre, but Jarre's epics are essentially just entertainment whereas Xenakis's have a strong intellectual basis.

In recent years Xenakis has suffered ill health, but as he approaches his seventy-fifth birthday he is still composing prolifically. His music is always pithy and dramatic: he never makes compromises for the sake of his listeners, nor does he make use of melodies and harmonies in the conventional sense; but such is the power of his constructive ability, the acuity of his musical ear for the invention of new sounds and textures, and above all the strength of his passion and intensity, that a fully committed performance (especially live) of a Xenakis work will rarely leave the listener unaffected.

Most of Xenakis's compositions have Greek titles, and he has composed much music associated with Greek drama, including incidental music for performances of plays in the ancient theatre at Epidaurus. In fact there is a remarkably strong and interesting corpus of music written over several decades now for productions at Epidaurus, from Greek composers on both the classical side and the popular.

A contemporary of Xenakis who made an international impact early on was Jani Christou (1926-1970), but since his early death his music has virtually disappeared from the musical scene. This is a considerable misfortune, as he was a strongly individual character and produced some of the most original music of his time. Christou was brought up in Alexandria, and

from his earliest days he was imbued with the ancient Egyptian obsession with life after death. In 1947 he came to England to study philosophy at King's College, Cambridge, with Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein. His musical style developed from atonality, through serial techniques to his own system: he created works by preparing, as it were, libraries of sound patterns which he subsequently selected and ordered into large-scale forms. He then expanded his palette by including all the performing arts in his works, using symbolic and pictorial notation in his music.

An example of his compositions is *Praxis* for twelve players (1966). The title *Praxis* means "purposeful action"; in this score he contrasts *praxis* in the sense of normal purposeful actions, in that the performers play in a fairly conventional way, with *metapraxis*, where their actions are beyond rational control. In his words, "a violinist playing the violin is a *praxis*; a violinist screaming instead of, or while, playing the violin, is a *metapraxis*." To give an instance, in one passage the *metapraxis* consists of the players walking to the piano (instead of staying still), then shouting out the names of notes (instead of playing them).

Christou's style can be seen at its most extreme in terms of its philosophy in his work *Epicycle.* The complete score consists of just one page, which contains around twenty-five small pictures of situations and events. Round the edge of the page are written the days of the week, within a set of musical repeat marks. In the instructions Christou writes:

> the work may last throughout any stretch of time: days, weeks, months, years... Anybody wishing to participate in the continuum is welcome. For this purpose any sound may be produced (including vocal participation). Vigils are also welcome.

The final paragraph reads:

> Apart from the final event, no prior notice can be given for the occurrence of any of the other events. But the possibility that no events will take place, not even the event listed as "final", is a built-in possibility.

Most of the present generation of Greek composers are writing mainly in what can be described in general terms as a Western European avant-garde style, though most of them at least occasionally use Greek subject matter for inspiration. There are also a few composers who rely strongly on the Byzantine tradition for inspiration, most notably Dimitri Terzakis and Michael Adamis. Adamis has written several works using Byzantine chant as the source material, and in keeping with Byzantine *melos* he writes in strictly horizontal style – this means that the lines of the music move in parallel, and are not constructed vertically, in a harmonic sense.

In the last thirty years there has been an absolute burgeoning of musical talent in Greece. A number of composers are working in Germany and Austria, mostly those now of an older age, including Mamangakis, Kounadis, Terzakis and Logothetis (another composer who has used graphic notation extensively).

Paris in particular has always had a strong attraction for Greek artists; apart from Xenakis and, indeed, Vangelis, who lives there for much of the time, there are a number of the middle and younger generation who have both studied and worked there, including Couroupos and Koumendakis, and especially Georges Aperghis, who has developed his own type of multi-media works, performed mainly by his own group of performers. Indeed Aperghis recently received an award as the most-performed French composer in France!

Several of the younger Greek composers have also studied in London. One who has made an impression as a fine composer in a fairly conventional style and also as a leading teacher is Periklis Koukos (b. 1960), who now teaches composition at the Athens Conservatory.

One of the most interesting among the younger generation of Greek composers is Christos Hatzis (b.1953), who emigrated to Toronto in 1982. He has written music directly inspired by the neo-Byzantine tradition, which uses ancient Byzantine modes, as in *Crucifix*, inspired by a visit to Mount Athos in 1987, and *Heirmos*, inspired by visits to several Greek monasteries in 1994. Hatzis recently had a ballet score commissioned in Britain for the Shobana Jeyasingh Company, a leading Indian dance company. This score is another link to the Byzantine tradition: the title is *Byzantium* and the music straddles East and West,

with Indian drums patterns, solo melody lines like an Indian shawm, but with western harmonies and techniques. Another recent work by Hatzis is the chamber work *On Cerebral Dominance*. The plan for this work is quite intellectual, as the title suggests, and it is uncompromising, in that in terms of its content and the difficulty to the players it is definitely avant-garde; but in terms of the aural result it is a highly attractive and engaging work. It again in its musical design straddles two worlds: in this case the New World – the United States – and the Old World – Europe, as still represented in his home country of Canada; Greek music is thus taken beyond a European to a New World dimension.

The western tradition of music is thus alive and well in Greece, though to achieve sustained international success composers and artists still tend to emigrate to other countries. The standards of performance in Greece, particularly by orchestras, remain below the best of many European countries, though the opening of the major new concert hall in Athens, the Megaron, has raised the international profile of music and performance in Greece. As the country gradually becomes a more equal partner in European culture the standards and achievements will no doubt improve in parallel. But it is to be hoped that Greece's own indigenous musical culture – folk music and the Byzantine heritage – do not suffer as a result, as such traditions have in so many European countries. The joy of music in Greece is its variety and richness of styles and traditions, and every effort should be made to protect and encourage these traditions so that they continue to flower as living and vital forces, and do not become another part of the European museum of folk culture.

A note on bibliography

There is little published in English about Greek music, except for specialised articles on specific subjects. The general reader will find informative articles in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd. 1980), Vol. 7, under the entry "Greece: I. Ancient. II. Post-Byzantine to 1830. III. After 1830. IV. Folk"; Byzantine

music is covered in Vol. 3 under "Byzantine rite, music of the"; and there are articles on a number of individual composers.

On the life and music of Xenakis, see Nouritza Matossian, *Xenakis* (London: Kahn and Averill, New York: Taplinger 1986). On Theodorakis, see Gail Holst, *Theodorakis: Myth and politics in modern Greek music* (Amsterdam: Hakkert 1980).

A good general account of the rise of *rebetika* in Greece can be found in Gail Holst, *Road to rembetika* (Athens: Denise Harvey 1975, ^{4}1989). I. Petropoulos's *Ρεμπέτικα τραγούδια* (Athens: Kedros 1968, ^{2}1979) is a classic work on the subject. See also Stathis Gauntlett, *Rebetika: carmina Graeciae recentioris: a contribution to the definition of the term and the genre rebetiko tragoudi through detailed analysis of its verses and of the evolution of its performance* (Athens: Denise Harvey 1985).

For a good general survey of opera and operetta in nineteenth-century Greece, see N. Bakounakis, *Το φάντασμα της Νόρμα. Η υποδοχή του μελοδράματος στον ελληνικό χώρο το 19ο αιώνα* (Athens: Kastaniotis 1991).

For an interesting account of Greek music in the United States, see Ole L. Smith, "Cultural identity and cultural interaction: Greek music in the United States, 1917-1941", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 13.1 (1995) 125-38.

The poet as witness: Titos Patrikios and the legacy of the Greek Civil War *

David Ricks

In 1993 Titos Patrikios marked his fifty years as a Greek poet; in 1995 he received the Greek State Prize for his life's work in literature; he has (on my calculation) some seven books in print; and he has been widely anthologized.[1] For all that, his poetry has received relatively little critical attention, and surprisingly few of his poems have appeared in English translation.[2] The general introduction which follows to what has been one of the poet's most distinctive contributions hopes, on a modest scale, to meet both these needs.

But what, to begin with, of the legacy of the Civil War, a subject which is, in Patrikios's earlier work, his overriding theme? The blurb for perhaps the best of the late Alexandros Kotzias's novels speaks, startlingly, of a Thirty Years War; a war, that is, from 1944 (when high-intensity armed clashes first broke out between left- and right-wing forces) and 1974 (when,

---

* An earlier form of this paper was given at the following universities other than Cambridge: Birmingham, Oxford, and Queens College (City University of New York); I am indebted to these audiences for their comments. All references made in square brackets in the text here are to Titos Patrikios, *Μαθητεία ξανά* (Athens 1991); all works cited in the footnotes have Athens as place of publication unless otherwise indicated.

[1] See most fully Alex. Argyriou (ed.), *Η ελληνική ποίηση, ανθολογία - γραμματολογία, τόμ. Ε΄. Η πρώτη μεταπολεμική γενιά* (Sokolis 1990), pp. 566-79, with bibliography.

[2] Patrikios's earlier work is discussed in the influential studies of D.N. Maronitis, *Ποιητική και πολιτική ηθική* (1976) and Sonia Ilinskaya, *Η μοίρα μιας γενιάς* (1976), but not in great detail in either case. The only book on Patrikios, Kostas Pappas, *Η ποίηση του Τίτου Πατρίκιου (Στάση ζωής)* (n.d.), is next to useless. There is a generous selection of Patrikios's work in English translation by Carmen Capri-Karka, *The Charioteer* 28 (1986) 42-101, with translation of Maronitis's comments on pp. 35-41; see also Peter Mackridge's versions in *Verse* 5 (1986) 57-8.

with the fall of the Colonels' dictatorship, Greece returned to the democratic fold).[3] Though the thaw in the microcosm, the "Cold Civil War" (1949-1974) occurred before the thaw in the macrocosm, the Cold War proper, acute pressures were exerted on a small but strategically important country which found itself at the shifting edge between the Cold War superpowers. Such pressures naturally had a heavy cost – widely documented in current historical research – for the country as a whole; but they also bore intensely on the preoccupations of Greek poetry, and on the very contours of poets' careers.

Seferis, for example, having hinted eloquently at the Civil War in *Thrush* (1946) (itself echoing Eliot's recollections of the English Civil War in *Little Gidding*), remained silent for the following nine years (though some weak poems preserved in his journals refer to the Civil War), and then produced his Cyprus collection, later retitled *Logbook III*.[4] Elytis, having commemorated the Second World War in what still seems to some of us his most satisfying production, the *Lay heroic and funereal for the fallen second lieutenant in Albania*, waited no fewer than fifteen years to publish his *magnum opus, The Axion Esti*. There he elaborately, and not without vatic self-mythologizing, advances his claim to speak of the Civil War and its aftermath against – among other things – the voice of a group which he suggestively refers to as "the young Alexandrians" or "the new Alexandrians" (οι *νέοι* Αλεξανδρείς). What does he mean by this phrase?[5]

---

[3] Alexandros Kotzias, cover of *Αντιποίησις αρχής* (1979).

[4] For the Civil War and Seferis, see Roderick Beaton, *George Seferis* (Bristol 1991), pp. 116-17, and David Ricks, "George Seferis and Theodore Roethke: two versions of Modernism" in: Dimitris Tziovas (ed.), *Greek Modernism and beyond* (Lanham, Md., forthcoming 1997). For a Seferis poem on the Civil War (1949), see *Μέρες Ε'* (1977), p. 140.

[5] Odysseus Elytis, *Το 'Αξιον Εστί* (Athens 1977), p. 48. Tasos Lignadis, *Το 'Αξιον Εστί του Ελύτη. Εισαγωγή, σχολιασμός, ανάλυση* (1977), p. 168 argues that Elytis's target here is rationalism; a slightly different point emerges from the poet's own commentary, which identifies οι *νέοι* της παρακμής ... που δεν πιστεύουν σε τίποτε και κηρύττουν ψευδοεπαναστάσεις: see Giorgos Kechagioglou, "'Ενα ανέκδοτο υπόμνημα του Ελύτη για το 'Αξιον Εστί", *Ποίηση* 5 (Spring 1995) 27-66 (quotation from pp. 41 and 57).

I suspect this may be in part a dig at the laconic, ironic presence of Cavafy among the younger generation of poets such as Anagnostakis and Alexandrou.[6] Elytis seems to be alluding to a group of detractors, poets for whom poetry is subordinate to something else – with the original Alexandrians, to *doctrina*; with the latter-day *epigoni* of Cavafy, to a (social) world beyond the poem. Cavafy classically makes the point that poets can be overtaken by events in his poem "Darius", but by 1959 and the publication of Elytis's poem the interpretation of Cavafy had been (over-)extended by Tsirkas's influential reading of Cavafy's poetry as political allegory.[7] Elytis apparently takes exception to what he sees – not without *amour propre* – as a lack of artistic freedom, a scholasticism, even, in the younger poets' wish to record with painful literalism the events around them, and in their nagging social conscience. The generation of Anagnostakis, of course, quite openly repudiates the Thirties generation, and Elytis in particular, without necessarily falling for Tsirkas's Cavafy.[8] That may seem to leave this "first post-war generation" in a permanently disorientated position, without either the consolations of poetry as an escape or the fervours of the vehemently "engaged" writer.[9] But it also generates a certain problem for the reader outside Greece.

For the poetry of this generation is preoccupied by a sense of "our age".[10] It is in the work of Anagnostakis that this attitude has been taken to its limit, with a sense that *only* this generation can understand itself, while even its apparent or

---

[6] On the latter's Cavafian mode see David Ricks, "Aris Alexandrou", *Grand Street* 8.2 (Winter 1989) 120-8.

[7] Stratis Tsirkas, *Ο Καβάφης και η εποχή του* (1958).

[8] Manolis Anagnostakis, "Το καινούριο τραγούδι", *Τα ποιήματα, 1941-1971* (1992), pp. 39-41. Anagnostakis's review of Tsirkas appears in his journal *Κριτική* 1 (1959) 257-61; this opening volume of the journal is a valuable introduction to the perspective of the non-aligned Left poets to which Patrikios was gradually tending.

[9] A good introduction to the question of generations is D.N. Maronitis, *Ποιητική και πολιτική ηθική* (1976).

[10] I take the term, with its connotations of possessiveness, from Noel Annan's *Our age* (London 1990), itself conditioned by war-time experience.

professed soulmates of, say, the Sixties Left can never do so. Of his generation, Anagnostakis commented long after that

> I believe, moreover, that the poetry of that period, or about that period, is, as a document, one of the most gripping testimonies – shall I dare to say it? – even on a world level. Because it clearly antedates what came to us much later from abroad in the form of a poetry of social challenge, concerned protest, etc., and often indeed in a very strident and superficial form.[11]

The same sentiment (against the Beat poets and perhaps their Greek younger imitators such as Lefteris Poulios) underlies several of the short texts in Anagnostakis's little volume of prose texts, *The Margin '68-'69* (circulated privately in 1968-1969). One of the pieces in it is worth referring to here because it gives, with almost miraculous coincidence, an indication of what Anagnostakis means by "on a world level".

Anagnostakis imagines a poet (evidently of the Thirties generation – but who?) politely receiving visitors in his study and discussing the problems of poetic expression in our troubled times; he then juxtaposes the picture of another poet being visited by visitors who are by no means as polite – torturers who are coming to see him in a prison or police cell.[12] The poet's predicament under the Colonels (explored by Maronitis, a victim himself, in his coded essay on Cavafy's "Darius") here takes a fearful form.[13] But it happens to be the exact form it takes in a remarkable passage from Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Hope against hope*, that work which, above all others, may stand as the judge of why modern poetry matters. The affinity of the two passages comes from a shared (though by no means proportionate) adversity across the Iron Curtain, not from a borrowing of one from the other: *Hope against hope* only appeared in 1970 – but it is a close one. Mandelstam's widow writes:

---

[11] Anagnostakis, interview in: Andonis Fostieris and Thanasis Th. Niarchos, *Σε δεύτερο πρόσωπο. Συνομιλίες με 50 συγγραφείς και καλλιτέχνες* (1990), pp. 25-31 (quotation from p. 27).

[12] Anagnostakis, *Το περιθώριο '68-'69* (1985), p. 24.

[13] Maronitis, "Υπεροψία και μέθη", in the collective volume *Δεκαοχτώ κείμενα* (1970), pp. 135-54. See also "Athenian", *Inside the Colonels' Greece* (tr. Richard Clogg, London 1972), p. 134.

> The fear that goes with the writing of verse has nothing in common with the fear that one experiences in the presence of the secret police. Our mysterious awe in the face of existence itself is always overridden by the more primitive fear of violence and destruction. M[andelstam] often spoke of how the first kind of fear had disappeared with the Revolution which had shed so much blood before our eyes.[14]

To compare the pictures presented by the Greek and the Russian respectively is not to compare right-wing dominance and intimidation with communist terror, Makronisos with Kolyma. But the fear felt by individual poets under either system was real enough, and Anagnostakis's instinct about the value of post-war Greek poetry as, in several senses, *testimony*, is a sound one.[15] (Greek prose as testimony is perhaps even more familiar to students of post-war Greek writing.[16])

But testimony doesn't always make for easy reading, and not just because it is, more or less by definition, on painful subjects. For those nails of authentic reference driven in by the poet as witness may often reflect distinctly, even forbiddingly, private notions of testimony.[17] Let me give one example.

Anagnostakis signs off his poetic career in 1971 with a quotation from a poem by Patrikios, saying:

> Because, as my friend Titos so rightly says,
> no verse today overturns régimes

---

[14] Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope against hope* (tr. Max Hayward, Harmondsworth 1970), pp. 99-100.

[15] This notion is well explored in Henry Gifford, *Poetry in a divided world* (Cambridge 1986).

[16] See Peter Mackridge, "Testimony and fiction in Greek narrative prose 1944-1967" in: Roderick Beaton (ed.), *The Greek novel, A.D. 1-1985* (London 1988), pp. 90-102; Beaton, *An introduction to Modern Greek literature* (Oxford 1994), pp. 237-45.

[17] I take the metaphor from Anagnostakis, "Ποιητική", *Ποιήματα* p. 159; for a helpful discussion of the poem see Dimitris Tziovas, "Η ποιητική της ενοχής και το υλικό σθένος των λέξεων", *Ποίηση* 3 (Spring 1994) 89-107. For a more general treatment see David Ricks, "The best wall to hide our face behind: an introduction to the poetry of Manolis Anagnostakis", *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 12 (1996, forthcoming).

no verse today mobilizes the masses.[18]

The conversational tone is striking, and might seem to be relatively welcoming to the reader; but only by a thread does it convey the strength of a shared outlook rather than mere clubbiness. The doubts that bind this generation are real enough – fighting, internment, exile – but whether they survive to create meaning for later poets and readers will depend on the strength of the poems themselves. The poets of the first post-war generation find themselves in the delicate position of wanting to communicate with later generations, as all poets aspire to, without compromising or simplifying private meanings. The point is made in a poem by Patrikios himself:

SECRET LIFE

I used to talk to you about our secret life
but you knew it from books in foreign languages.
Dates, incidents, explanations –
in the face of such certainties
my secrets were turning into working hypotheses.[19]

The date appended, September '67, when the poet was in exile in Paris, is surely significant.

Here, then, we have a warning that you'd need more of a feeling for place and period than I could attain, let alone convey here. Some of the time, it is true, what Patrikios sets down seems to have a no doubt private meaning without perhaps making what one could call a poem at all:

NAMES

The one thing I can write
is your names.
Friends and poets, forgotten comrades,
Kostas, Manolis, Tasos, Yannis.

---

[18] Anagnostakis, "Επίλογος", *Ποιήματα*, p. 176.
[19] Patrikios, *Προαιρετική στάση* (1974), p. 5.

A pen and paper
can be found in all circumstances.
Dec. '67[20]

We may infer that Patrikios is alluding to fellow left-wing poets; we may be aware that in the poetry of Sinopoulos and, as we shall see, in that of Patrikios himself, the use of mere names can acquire considerable poetic power.[21] Yet does such a poem as the above possess aesthetic autonomy? It's a question much of Patrikios's work is not afraid to pose; and at this point it would be worth giving some skeletal information about the poet's life and career.[22]

In a literature so full of pseudonyms, Titos Patrikios sounds rather like one, and it certainly seems an ironical name for a former communist. Born in 1928, Patrikios did indeed attend one of Greece's more patrician schools; though he records of his schooldays his sense of awkwardness as coming from a family of actors.[23] Like many eminent Greek poets, he went on to study at Athens Law School (and later in Paris). But an adolescence in the Forties provided a harder school: Patrikios was involved in a series of communist-led organizations and took part in armed operations by ELAS in 1944-5, narrowly escaping death at the hands of collaborators. As a result, he spent a period in the early 1950s on the prison islands of Makronisos and Aï-Stratis, and a large part of the Colonels' dictatorship outside Greece.

Patrikios's first poem appeared in 1943, his first collection considerably later in 1954; and his poetic work now runs to several hundred not very full pages. With nine collections of poetry, Patrikios looks on the face of it much more prolific than Anagnostakis and Alexandrou, but all but two of his collections are short, and there is also a high degree of overlap between collections, with a number of poems appearing in more than one

---

[20] Patrikios, *Προαιρετική στάση*, p. 7.
[21] Takis Sinopoulos, *Νεκρόδειπνος* (1972), pp. 17-22.
[22] I derive this information from Argyriou, *Η πρώτη μεταπολεμική γενιά*.
[23] See on his schooldays Patrikios, *Η συμμορία των δεκατρία* (1990).

collection or arrangement.[24] Anagnostakis and Alexandrou presented the public with volumes of collected poems in 1971 and 1974 respectively in the conviction that these volumes would not be added to: in Patrikios's case, no collected volume exists, and it is a pleasure to report that he remains productive. My discussion here will concentrate on just one phase of Patrikios's work, that perhaps best known to the reading public, which is covered in the volume *Learning process over again* (*Μαθητεία ξανά*) (1991).

It's not necessarily very helpful to describe the poet's style in isolation – I hope to get some of this across later – but it may be said that short, typically unmetrical poems dominate, in a style plain, colloquial and often nakedly sententious. But do aphorisms, however, sharp, make poetry? It's a question which worried an older poet, Takis Sinopoulos, in a stern but thought-provoking review of *Learning process* in its first version (1963), with the title "Poetry, incorporation and testimony".[25] It was at this very time that Sinopoulos was working to blend his own experiences as a doctor in the National Army in the Civil War into his finest poem, *Feast of the dead* (*Νεκρόδειπνος*); and with this high and cherished example in mind he turned his attention to the younger poet's collection.[26] While acknowledging that the subjects were real and pressing ones, he felt with regret that Patrikios's poems were "like drafts of poems", with the personal experiences sharp but essentially unassimilated to public discourse. The argument that newer poets are difficult is a familiar one in debates about poetry; the charge that their poems are unfinished is little less familiar, with Sinopoulos's charge bearing a distinct resemblance to that of Palamas against Cavafy three decades earlier.[27] In both cases we should take the disagreement for an honest one, and then go on to see what we can derive from the poems in dispute. What I aim to show in the

---

[24] For textual information see Patrikios's collections *Μαθητεία ξανά*, pp. 185-6 and *Αντιδικίες*, p. 55.

[25] Sinopoulos, "Ποίηση, ένταξη και μαρτυρία", *Εποχές* 8 (Dec. 1963) 68-71, especially p. 171.

[26] For a year-by-year chronicle see Michalis Pieris, *Ο χώρος και ο χρόνος του Τάκη Σινόπουλου 1917-1981* (1988).

[27] Kostis Palamas, *Άπαντα* 14, p. 181: "σκίτσα ιδεών"; compare Sinopoulos's phrase, "προσχέδια ποιημάτων".

main part of this discussion is how far Patrikios succeeds in a form of poetics outlined by Anagnostakis with respect to his own case as follows:

> I sometimes rewrite, restricting them to a few verses, some condensed experiences and things lived, which, if I think they reflect a more general situation, I put in the public domain.[28]

Learning process, then, was the title Patrikios chose for his 1963 collection; we might even call it "apprenticeship", with its suggestion of a task externally imposed, perhaps with penalties – and there is certainly a modesty topos here, with a hint at anything but *maestria*. The version of the collection under discussion here, however, is *Learning process over again* (1991), a volume of 183 pages with some 140 poems, just over half of which appeared in the original edition. The other poems, marked with an asterisk in the table of contents, date from the same period, 1956-1962, and the poems in each section are arranged chronologically. (Many of the other poems from the first *Learning process*, covering the early Fifties, reappeared in a volume of collected earlier poems, *Poems I (1948-1954)*, which appeared in 1977.[29]) The extra word in the new title indicates a revised edition, and to that extent a revaluation of an earlier phase of work in the light of nearly three decades of subsequent experience.

But the reordering is neither a purely aesthetic point (the poems have not been individually revised from edition to edition) nor indicative of a large-scale political reorientation. In the light of the fall of his cherished Berlin Wall, the poems of Ritsos's last collection, *Late, very late at night*, take on a certain ruefulness about old beliefs.[30] Yet while the ending of the Cold War must have given some impulse to the reissuing by Patrikios of poems devoted to the Cold War at its height, he has not availed himself of hindsight. This is partly because his political beliefs were in any case unravelling by 1956, but also

---

[28] Anagnostakis in Fostieris and Niarchos, *Σε δεύτερο πρόσωπο*, p. 25.
[29] Patrikios, *Ποιήματα I (1948-1954)* (1977).
[30] See Sarah Ekdawi, "Σφυρίγματα πλοίων: the last poems of Yannis Ritsos", *Μαντατοφόρος* 37-8 (1993-4) 107-17.

because what he has tried to do is not to make a revaluation of the period, but to set out for a reader with hindsight the fullest possible testimony to a period. The judgements and reactions of thirty years ago are not set aside or tampered with, nor yet recollected in tranquillity; but a context is established for the poems in a writer's life and times.

We may, at the risk of over-simplifying, divide Patrikios's poems in the collection into four categories. The first, which will not particularly concern me here, consists of poems about love or family life. Their main function within the collection is to contrast the *par excellence* personal choices of an individual life with those of the collective – exposing a sense of guilt and a feeling that all individual choices are, at this period and from this perspective, little more than self-indulgences.

A second category is devoted to poems about disillusionment with the Communist Party. There is a good deal of letting off steam here, and valuable testimony to the period; but it is unclear that this sort of subject is best handled in verse – though Alexandrou makes a brave stab at it with the opening poem of his third and best collection, "Communication, *à la manière de Jdanov*"(1959).[31] More searching and elaborate accounts have proved possible in prose: Tsirkas's *Ungoverned cities* and Alexandrou's own *The strong-box*.[32] But in some cases Patrikios does manage to link politics and poetry in a compelling manner [89]:

REHABILITATION OF LASZLO RAJK

However much I'd like to I cannot mourn you Laszlo
since I too was visiting your cell back then
in the fearful guise of Peter Gabor,
since I was there when they interrogated you
when they tortured you, when you confessed,
since I continued to condemn you even at the very time
I was starting to hear inside me the cracks opening.
May '56

---

[31] Aris Alexandrou, "Εισήγηση à la manière de Jdanov", *Τα ποιήματα 1941-1974* (1992), pp. 73-4.

[32] Tsirkas, *Ακυβέρνητες πολιτείες* (1960-5); Alexandrou, *Το κιβώτιο* (1974).

Here the Hungarian revolutionary, who served as interior and foreign minister before being executed on a trumped-up charge in 1948, is recalled in the year of the Hungarian rising. Not only is his rehabilitation a fruitless one, it is itself destined to be overturned with the Soviet crushing of Hungary. And the poet's own role? One of complicity.

If we set aside the strictly political poems, this leaves two further categories of Patrikios's poetry on which I shall have more to say: poems giving the atmosphere of the times and, in Cavafian phrase, the "domain" of Patrikios's poetry; and, finally, poems concentrating on the difficulties of making poetry itself.[33] Let us begin with the poet's interpretation of the spirit of the age.

Anagnostakis in 1959 wrote of poetry's only real function – its only residual function – as being a form of what he calls "heretical presence".[34] In the case of Patrikios's poetry this may be understood as being, in the first place, a way of seeing. This is not, of course, in the old idiom of Sikelianos, who, at the magnificent high-water-mark of poetic self-belief, understands the poet to be gifted with an ability to see through the veil of appearances – but see through appearances Patrikios does claim to do in, say, this poem from 1959 [161]:

PICTURES OF DAILY LIFE

This house which looks just like the one next door
was where the torture chambers were;
this man, unnoticed in the crowd,
was the informer with the mask;
this lorry, exactly the same
as the others of its model,
took the prisoners to their execution.
We ought to look at things and people
a little more closely.

---

[33] C.P. Cavafy, "Κρυμμένα", *Ανέκδοτα ποιήματα (1882-1923)* (ed. G.P. Savidis 1968), p. 151.

[34] Anagnostakis, "Η ποίηση - παρόν και μέλλον", *Κριτική* 1 (1959) 106-11 (quotation from p. 111).

The poem sketches the feeling of Kotzias's novel *Noble Telemachus*, where the son of a racketeer in the Occupation eventually loses his sanity under the pressure of this knowledge.[35]

Counterposed to this is the idea that what we actually get served up with by our rulers is a sort of Plato's Cave, which aims through the administering of opiates to occlude the pain of which the poet properly ought to be reminding us [56]:

AT THE CINEMA

Politely we relax side by side
laugh or are moved
pursuer and hunted
tortured and torturer
lover and husband.
For just two hours in the dark
calm, anonymous and well-disposed.

The general comfort and relative anonymity of the Affluent Society masking darker things is a core feeling in Anagnostakis too.[36] One may still catch a glimpse of this today in the sombre look of people passing Makronisos on their way back from an Aegean holiday.

In the view of Anagnostakis, as with Patrikios, the consequent prime subject of poetry will be the painful, but also – and here he follows in the footsteps of Ritsos's short poems – the distinctively marginal or even crepuscular [24]:

A HALF HOUR

Neighbourhoods briefly change at nightfall
respectable men return from the office
proprietors shut up shop, the squares empty out.
And then gradually there emerge onto the streets

---

[35] Alexandros Kotzias, *Ο γενναίος Τηλέμαχος* (1972).

[36] See, above all, the end of Anagnostakis's poem, "Αισθηματικό διήγημα", *Ποιήματα*, pp. 170-2. The role of the Kelvinator refrigerator there is played by a Kenwood mixer in Thanasis Valtinos, *Τρία ελληνικά μονόπρακτα* (1978), pp. 65-83.

girls with twisted legs in their wheelchairs,
half-crazy children, women with faces burnt black,
men with fingers chewed up by machinery.

For just a half hour to get a breath of air
in the empty streets with the windows shuttered up.

A different manner on much the same subject is one of breezy sarcasm, opening a breath of air on things not talked about in polite society – a society whose almost viral powers of sapping the truth are acknowledged with bitterness [28]:

ATHENIAN SUMMER IN 1956

This year we had so many events...
Nonetheless, the summer was the same as ever,
the same ice-creams in the confectioners
and the same concert programmes.
Lots of people were also discussing change
which they located principally
in the restoration of ancient monuments
or in the hairstyles of ladies
some of whom had actually
once been active in the Resistance.

1956 is of course the year of Krushchev's Secret Speech denouncing Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress; of the Russian invasion of Hungary; of the Suez crisis, which led to the downfall of the Greek community in Egypt; not to mention the continuing bloodshed in Cyprus. But the prosperity of Karamanlis's Greece, the restoration of the Herodes Atticus theatre and so on, militate against any self-knowledge – even among women who turn out in the last verse to have been politically active and risking everything only a decade before.

This notion of the "sell-out" pervades Patrikios's entire *oeuvre*. He sees scars healing, but thinks that it is poetry's most important job to open them again [58]:

GETTING ON

Old friend
comrade from the great days
pardon me if yesterday, as you were preening yourself
on your new furniture,
I was thinking that each piece
had behind it a certain concession,
about a thousand drachmas' worth of prostituted thought
which you were now hawking
without even feeling the need
to make something tragic out of it.

What, then, is the role of poetry? A mordant hint is made in this little poem [57]:

IDYLL

She was drinking an orangeade
in the background hair salons and travel agents
while the fellow next to her
was entrancing her with idiotic verses.
And yet
her name was Antigone.

Here Patrikios satirizes a model to avoid. An unrecoverable literary genre from a lost era here meets an everyday colloquial idiom: a "fling".[37] Poetry seems nothing more here than a way of getting girls; the name of Antigone, accordingly, has been taken in vain. The theme of Antigone, for which George Steiner has provided a rich general exploration, is one which one would like to see explored in modern Greece beyond Seferis's *Thrush*.[38] Giangos Andreadis's interesting but disorderly book, *Τα παιδιά της Αντιγόνης*, certainly doesn't take us far; but food for thought may be found in Conor Cruise O'Brien's defence of Ismene in that distempered year 1968, a defence which Palamas actually made

---

[37] "From a lost era": I adapt the subtitle of Anagnostakis's anthology, *Η χαμηλή φωνή. Τα λυρικά μιας χαμένης εποχής* (1990).
[38] George Steiner, *Antigones* (1984).

in a little poem of the 1930s.[39] "The poetry of Antigone and Ismene" would make an interesting categorization in twentieth-century Greek poetry – and it's quite clear with which of the sisters Patrikios and his generation have the closer affinity.

Yet the poetic context as seen by Patrikios abounds in false models; and if one is art for art's sake, another is bombastic heroizing with a folkloric colouring.[40] This comes out epigrammatically in the following poem [137]:

HALF-FORGOTTEN POEM

We are the children of the rain and of the wild lightning
the liberating earthquake of a storm to change the world...

Big words, you'll say, bad poetry,
and I can't even remember who wrote it,
yet in those days that's exactly how we felt.

An attempt to balance up one's past and present beliefs, and a nation's earlier possibilities with what has actually come about, is made with a weight of suppressed sadness in the following poem, dated April 1956 and recalling a district afflicted in the Civil War and later depopulated by emigration – in other words, a world away from the memories of a warm collective life of which the poem only half-ironically speaks [151]:

MEMORIES OF THE VILLAGES ON THE SPERCHEIOS

The smell of stables, of damp grass,
the smell of smoke from wet firewood
the steam from our clothes drying
the blistered feet, the lice.
Sleep in the hay
would come to us hungry as we were and full of optimism
after a poem

---

[39] Giangos Andreadis, *Τα παιδιά της Αντιγόνης* (1989); Conor Cruise O'Brien's essay first appeared in *The Listener* (Oct. 1968) and is now in *States of Ireland* (London 1972); Palamas, *Άπαντα* 12, p. 524.
[40] See e.g. Vasilis Rotas, *Τραγούδια της Αντίστασης* (1981).

or a discussion about the distinction
between *kolkhoz* and *sovchoz*.

The poem mentioned here is sandwiched between physical privations almost lovingly recalled and an evidently sterile if not sinister political discussion. It is the fact, not least, that poetry *didn't* have pride of place in those days that shows how happy they were – but now only poetry can bring them back.

All these poems are, it may be said, painted into a corner: each is telling in its own way what poetry is not. With a full awareness of the objections that may be advanced, but with a pretty deep sense of purpose too, Patrikios continues this line of regret in a couple of poems which require little enough commentary [97]:

VERSES 2

Verses which make an outcry,
verses which supposedly stand tall like bayonets
verses which threaten the established order
and with their few feet
make or break the revolution,
useless, fake, boastful,
because no verse today breaks régimes
no verse mobilizes the masses.
(What masses? Between ourselves, now –
who thinks of the masses?
At the most it's a personal release, if not a way of getting a
reputation.)
That's why I no longer write
in order to provide paper rifles
weapons out of verbose, hollow words.
It's just to lift up an edge of the truth
to shed a little light on our forged life.
As long as I can, and as long as I hold out.

August 1957

The principal target here is no doubt Stalinist poets like Alexei Tolstoy or Louis Aragon.[41] At the same time, Patrikios's vocation must also be protected against those who speak too glibly of letting bygones be bygones. Reacting against criticism rather in the manner of Karyotakis's poem "Critique" (and Patrikios has written on Karyotakis as satirist), Patrikios responds with sinister brevity [91]:

LIKE GRAVE-ROBBERS

And if poets in our time smell too much for your taste of
corpses
it is because at night they hang around the cemeteries
like grave-robbers
searching the dead in the hope of finding even a scraping
of truth.[42]

But it is in the last four poems I shall glance at here (poems which do not, I should stress, appear as a group in the collection) that Patrikios most eloquently addresses the almost disabling predicament of the poet – and at the same time the burden of memory which it is his to sustain.

ΤΑ ΛΟΓΙΑ

"Μάνα," της είπα μέσα απ' τα κάγκελα του κρατητήριου,
"σού 'χω μιλήσει τόσο λίγο... Όταν θα βγω..."
Δίπλα στεκότανε ο χωροφύλακας.
Αντιμετώπιζα την περίπτωση
να μην την ξαναδώ ποτέ.
Σαν έπειτα από χρόνια πήγα σπίτι
έπεσε μες στην αγκαλιά μου κ' έκλαιγε,
όμως τα λόγια πάλι βγήκανε φτωχά.
Και πήρα τα ξυριστικά μου σύνεργα
να κάνω μπάνιο και να ξυριστώ.

---

[41] Compare e.g. Manolis Lambridis, "Το πρόβλημα των μορφών και η έννοια του σύγχρονου στην τέχνη [3rd instalment]", *Κριτική* 1 (1959) 120-30, especially p. 128.

[42] K.G. Karyotakis, "Κριτική", *Ποιήματα και πεζά* (ed. G.P. Savidis 1988), p. 77; Patrikios, "Κώστας Καρυωτάκης" in *Σάτιρα και πολιτική* (Etairia Spoudon 1979), pp. 250-74.

WORDS

"Mother", I said to her through the bars of the holding cell,
"I've talked so little with you... When I get out..."
The gendarme was standing right there.
I was facing the possibility
of never seeing her again.
When years later I went home
she fell into my arms and started to cry,
but the words once again came out inadequate.
And I took my shaving things
to go and have a bath and shave [134].

The poem is bluntly unpoetic in manner, though, like all four in question, basically iambic – something which intensifies them and distinguishes them from Patrikios's normally more prosaic manner; a sign indeed that we are here going to get as close as we ever do to the pretensions of poetry as traditionally understood. But of course the poem is, in its concise, flat way aiming to suggest the inadequacy of words to feelings. There is in the poem just one splinter of strangeness round which its meaning is irritated and grows: the pleonasm of the last two lines, which draws attention precisely to the poet's awareness (now, in retrospect) of his own clumsiness with words and hence with the larger situations with which words are expected to deal. The two halves into which the poem falls give it a symmetry, and the last lines seal this by revealing themselves as a transcription from direct to indirect speech of the quotidian mumbling of our talk even on the most important occasions: "I'll just take my shaving things and go and have a bath and shave." By a whisker, the poem escapes being a human situation which doesn't get put into words – not, however, by finding new words, let alone ideas (Patrikios, a puritan in this respect in this phase of his career, is suspicious of both), but by making such a configuration as to suggest the poet's hard-won self-knowledge.

A very similar problem, on a wider front, and perhaps with more likely pitfalls, is the theme of "Eight years" [135]:

ΟΧΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΙΑ

Έλειψε οχτώ χρόνια.
Φυλακή, Μακρόνησο, εξορία.
Σαν ξανάρθε,
οι φίλοι τον αγκάλιαζαν και τον ρωτούσαν.
Μ' αυτά που έλεγε φαίνονταν τόσο απλά
τόσο συνηθισμένα...
Κ' έκλεισε για μια στιγμή τα μάτια
να δει ξανά την παγωμένη απομόνωση,
τις νύχτες στη χαράδρα,
λίγο να ξαναζήσει τις αγωνίες της κάθε μέρας
που τώρα, μέσα στη χορτασμένη πολιτεία
αλλάζαν σε κοινότοπες επαναλήψεις.

He was away eight years.
Prison, Makronisos, exile.
When he returned
his friends set about embracing him and asking him questions.
But what he had to say seemed so simple
so ordinary...
And he shut his eyes for a moment
in order to see once more the frozen isolation cell,
the nights in the ravine,
to re-live just a little the agonies of each day
which now, in the well-fed town,
were turning into oft-repeated clichés.

This poem has the same structure as the previous one, once again a gloss on the title in two halves. Eight years is to other people just a short space of time: "he was away" (έλειψε) is from their point of view. The returned exile, by contrast, must make a conscious effort to retrieve (with a non-continuous past, this time) even the painful memories of privation – before the end of the poem reveals a slippage: the continuous tenses are inexorably depriving the subject of his own authentic experiences, and he is starting to repeat himself even within the poem.

Patrikios comes a little closer to embracing a poet's vocation rather than simply trying to avoid unwanted modes of speaking in the next poem [115]:

ΟΦΕΙΛΗ

Μέσα από τόσο θάνατο που έπεσε και πέφτει,
πολέμους, εκτελέσεις, δίκες, θάνατο κι άλλο θάνατο,
αρρώστεια, πείνα, τυχαία δυστυχήματα,
δολοφονίες από πληρωμένους εχθρών και φίλων,
συστηματική υπόσκαψη κ' έτοιμες νεκρολογίες
είναι σα να μου χαρίστηκε η ζωή που ζω.
Δώρο της τύχης, αν όχι κλοπή απ' τη ζωή άλλων,
γιατί η σφαίρα που της γλύτωσα δε χάθηκε
μα χτύπησε το άλλο κορμί που βρέθηκε στη θέση μου.
Έτσι σα δώρο που δεν άξιζα μου δόθηκε η ζωή
κι όσος καιρός μου μένει
σαν οι νεκροί να μου τον χάρισαν
για να τους ιστορήσω.

Νοέμβριος 1957

INDEBTEDNESS

Out of all the death that has come down and is still coming down,
wars, executions, trials, death and more death,
sickness, hunger, random accidents,
murders of enemies and friends by paid assassins,
systematic undermining and prepared obituaries,
it is as if the life I live has been granted by act of clemency.
A gift of chance, if not theft from the lives of others,
for the bullet I escaped did not vanish
but hit the next body which found itself in my place.
So, as a gift I was not deserving of, life has been given me
and such time as I have left
is as if granted to me by the dead
to limn them.

November '57

The mixture of events is familiar from the Cold Civil War: the poem was written before the assassination of Lambrakis in 1963 (the classic "car accident" dramatized in Vasilis Vasilikos's Z and in Costa-Gavras's film of that name) but after the death of the former EAM general Stefanos Sarafis in 1957, in a car crash believed by some to have been an assassination.[43] The dead

[43] Marion Sarafis, introduction to Maj.-Gen. Stefanos Sarafis, *ELAS: Greek Resistance Army* (tr. Sylvia Moody, London 1980), pp. xcviii-xcix.

assume in Patrikios's poem the role of a benign judiciary with theological overtones (the word χάρη meaning "grace" and "clemency"). Hence the last and central word in the poem: ιστορήσω. Instead of using the nearly identical, and perhaps expected, verb, εξιστορώ (or possibly ανιστορώ), "to tell of/to tell their story", Patrikios chooses a verb which, while containing the "story/history" root, and which in ancient Greek may be used in the senses: to inquire about a person, or to make inquiry of a person (or indeed an oracle), is used in the modern language specifically of religious painting. The cult of the dead which the poem then embraces is a quiet, solitary, even wordless one.[44]

We see this attitude expressed with still greater precision and concision in the final poem for which there is room in this discussion [159]:

ΕΠΙΤΥΜΒΙΟ

Αν είμουν πιο καλός ποιητής
θα ταίριαζα γυμνά τα ονόματά σας
σε μιαν ατέλειωτη σειρά να προϋπαντάει το μέλλον
με μόνη τη δική τους μουσική.

EPITAPH

Were I a better poet
I would fit your bare names
into one unending sequence going forth to meet the future
with nothing but their own intrinsic music.

---

[44] Emmanouil Kriaras, *Νέο ελληνικό λεξικό* (1995) gives the following definitions of ιστορώ: "1. εκθέτω με λεπτομέρειες και σε χρονολογική σειρά τα στοιχεία ενός γεγονότος... 2. ζωγραφίζω, διακοσμώ με ζωγραφικές παραστάσεις προσώπων και σκηνών από τη βιβλική και εκκλησιαστική παράδοση". The latter sense, of persons, is more natural as the primary sense in Patrikios's poem; yet the poem's last word does at the same time frame the poem in history. For an in some ways similar self-portrait of the poet as an artist working silently in a non-verbal medium, compare the monk in Palamas's *Η Φλογέρα του Βασιλιά* (*Άπαντα* 5, pp. 107-10), of whom the verb ανιστορίζει is used (p. 108).

Once again, heightened emotion, and a rapprochement of a very circumspect kind with traditional poetic aspirations come out in a clearly iambic metre; and of course the poem with its four lines has the shape of a typical epitaph. But the initial hope of poetic power, of memorializing the dead in powerful language, recedes before the gravity of the subject itself. The unmentioned names will stretch like a necklace or a peace chain to meet the future, once again with what could, beyond its everyday sense, be taken as a hint at religious language: the verb προϋπαντώ perhaps distantly echoing ὑπαπαντή.[45]

What then is the poet's task? Simply fitting names together like beads, in something that suggests a closeness to traditional oral poetry. Using mere names with all their randomness to conjure up all the waste of the Civil War was something done matchlessly by Sinopoulos. But what Patrikios has done is different: he has put us in mind of such a project, in a poem which is as musical as any of his get, yet at the same time he renounces it in a poem which suppresses himself in favour of an imagined future.

An apocryphal but illuminating story is told of the American poet James Dickey. On being jailed overnight for a traffic violation, he was seen triumphantly emerging the next day with a fat manuscript entitled *The prison poems of James Dickey*. It cannot be said that political self-deception is absent from the work of Patrikios and his contemporaries (though Patrikios has been his own sternest critic, as we have seen) – but self-promotion is not something of which he could be accused. Perhaps more time will be needed to establish how he stands in relation to his contemporaries, his predecessors and indeed his successors; but his best poems survive as a witness, in more than a purely documentary sense, to a period. In a passage quoted with approval by Seferis, Pound wrote of Henry James's achievement in terms one might well apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to Patrikios's work. In James's work, he writes, we find "whole decades of American life that otherwise would have been utterly lost, wasted, rotting

---

[45] The meeting of Simeon and the infant Christ (the Feast of the Purification): Luke 2:22-35.

in the unhermetic jars of bad writing, of inaccurate writing".[46] The decades that followed the Greek Civil War merited nothing less from Greek writers, and Patrikios has in his laconic way made an important contribution of his own.

King's College London

[46] Seferis, *Μέρες Γ'* (1977), p. 134. Pound had written this in 1918; Seferis notes it in 1939.

Greek attitudes to the Spanish Civil War

Thanasis D. Sfikas

I *Introduction*

Research into a topic entitled "Greece and the Spanish Civil War" can go a lot further than the few hundred Greek volunteers who joined the International Brigades in Spain. It may, for instance, involve a comparison of the ideologies of Francisco Franco and Ioannis Metaxas. Were the two generals fascists? What were the differences and the similarities between the ideologies they represented? And what was the connection between Franco's *Nuevo Estado*, Salazar's *Nuovo Estado*, and Metaxas's *Νέον Κράτος* – the Greek equivalent of the Spanish and Portuguese terms ? These are genuinely fascinating questions which, none the less, can be better answered after some more mundane groundwork has been done.

This groundwork must involve an examination of Greek attitudes to the Spanish Civil War, based on the interplay between ideology, foreign policy and economic necessity. The initial motivation for this approach was provided by an impression that while an enormous amount of attention has been paid to the study of the policies of the Great Powers towards the Spanish Republic and the Spanish Nationalists, so far no attention has been paid to the impact of Spanish developments on the diplomacy and security concerns of smaller states. This is understandable in view of the predominant role played by Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union, Britain and France in Spain in 1936-1939. Yet, as by far the most important issue in European diplomacy in the latter part of the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War had a major impact throughout the continent. The Eastern Mediterranean was no exception, as broader strategic concerns impelled the small states of the region anxiously to watch Spanish developments and the extent to which these were influenced by foreign intervention and non-intervention. Greece was particularly affected, not only because of the significant

parallels in the historical evolution of the two countries in the period between c. 1860 and the mid-1930s, but also because of her delicate and complex relations with three of the outside actors of the Spanish Civil War – Britain, Italy and Germany.

In this light, and by way of an introduction, a study of Greek attitudes to the Spanish Civil War offers an insight into the "parallel lives" of the Second Greek Republic of 1924-1935 and the Second Spanish Republic of 1931-1936. The identification of such common features as may exist in the historical development of Spain and Greece paves the way for a comparative approach to what for both countries were the defining phases of their modern experience: the civil wars of 1936-1939 and of 1946-1949; both were caused by the breakdown of political legitimacy and what Raymond Carr described – referring to Spain, but historians of Greece will recognize the broader resonance of his formulation – as "a vast and perilous process of mass politicization", which in the eyes of the "respectable classes" signified "the sudden entry of uncultured barbarians into regions of power hitherto inhabited by their superiors."[1] In Spain the "invasion" took place during the years of the Second Republic; in Greece in the 1930s there existed only the prospect of such an "invasion", which did not occur until the early 1940s, spearheaded by the communist-led National Liberation Front under the Axis occupation.

On a more theoretical plane, if one of the features of contemporary Greek historiography is its introverted nature and hellenocentricity, one can only repeat G.B. Leontaritis's comment that the study of other nations' histories is of the utmost importance not in order to transplant some fashionable new methodology, but in order to remain ever aware of the dangers of a historical and historiographical ethnocentricity, which prevents the realisation of the peculiar function of space and time, obscures the insight into the human collective memory, and ultimately leads to a self-centred and "illusionist" perception of

---

[1] R. Carr, *The Spanish Tragedy: The Civil War in perspective* (London 1977), p. 59.

historical evolution at large and of "our position in a world system" more specifically.[2]

With this warning in mind, and aware of the fact that the history of Metaxas's Greece is usually gauged either in terms of Anglo-Greek relations or in terms of an anguished discussion as to whether the general was a fascist, inquiries into the foreign policy and internal features of Metaxas's Greece can be enriched by focusing on Greek attitudes to the Spanish Civil War. This will not only take into account the ideological impact of the event, which was to be expected, but will also reveal some interesting constraints, fears and opportunities which the Spanish *stasis* presented for Greece.

This article will first discuss briefly why the Second Spanish Republic and the Second Greek Republic lived "parallel lives". Secondly, it will address Greek reactions to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, focusing on its ideological impact on, and utilisation by, the Metaxas regime. Finally, introducing into the discussion Greek foreign policy concerns and the condition of the Greek economy in the 1930s, it will discuss the interplay between ideology, foreign policy and economic necessity with reference to Greece's arms trade in Spain during the civil war, the role of Greek merchant shipping, and Greek diplomatic attitudes to the international dimensions and implications of the conflict.

II *Parallel lives*

The view that, at least in some ways, Spain and Greece lived "parallel lives" from around the 1860s onwards emerges from a comparison of their historical chronologies. Economic development in both countries, even if dissimilar in origins, pace and extent, unleashed similar tensions; liberal revolutions in the 1860s led to constitutional monarchies with hopes for genuinely liberal democratic regimes; disappointment of such hopes led to the politics of stagnation and calls for substantial change; major national humiliations in foreign affairs – in 1897 and 1922 for Greece, in 1898 and 1921 for Spain – rocked the foundations of the

---

[2] G.B. Leontaritis, "Η μόνιμη - και ίσως αξεπέραστη - κρίση των ιστορικών σπουδών στην Ελλάδα", *Σύγχρονα Θέματα* 35-36-37 (December 1988) 122.

old order and strengthened demands for national regeneration. At first the monarchies paid the price, but ultimately democracy was the major victim. In the 1930s both Republics faced major political, economic and social crises to which the "respectable classes" responded with an attack on democracy. The intensity of the crisis differed in the two countries, though it is argued that civil war was a possibility in Greece even in the 1930s.[3] This may well have been the case, but the response of the "respectable classes" was proportionate to the challenge. In Spain they interpreted the entire Republican experience since 1931 as the invasion of uncultured barbarians into the mansions of power, from where they tried to dislodge them by force of arms. In Greece the mere prospect that the barbarians might attempt a similar invasion prompted the "respectable classes" to do away with democracy. When the invasion actually took place in the 1940s, they too resorted to violence.

All this should not be seen as an over-zealous attempt to find parallels. Professor Edward Malefakis has pointed out that what distinguished the Second Spanish Republic from the roughly contemporaneous Republics in Greece, Portugal and even Weimar Germany was that at least in the first two years of its existence, it showed that its *raison d'être* was not simply to alter some political forms superficially, but to implement substantial reforms aiming at genuine national regeneration – something which the Second Greek Republic failed to do.[4] Yet underlying the upheavals which characterise the historical evolution of both countries was the precedence of political liberalism over industrialisation. Raymond Carr observed that much of modern Spanish history is explained by the imposition of advanced liberal institutions on an economically backward and conservative society – which is reminiscent of Nikos Svoronos's comment on Greece: an agrarian country, with a low level of economic development, which presented political structures

---

[3] G. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social coalitions and party strategies in Greece 1922-1936* (Berkeley 1983), p. 337.

[4] E. Malefakis quoted in G. Esenwein and A. Shubert, *Spain at War: The Spanish Civil War in context 1931-1939* (London 1995), p. 34; A. Rigos, *Η Β΄ Ελληνική Δημοκρατία*, 2nd ed. (Athens 1992), p. 311.

similar to those of the modern and advanced countries of the West.[5]

Since a comparative history of the two countries prior to July-August 1936 would be a fascinating but much larger topic, suffice it to point out here that if the two Republics shared one difficulty in the early 1930s, it was the emergence of the underprivileged into the forefront of politics. Although the process was complete in Spain and only just beginning in Greece, the former served notice on the latter. This was suggested by the Greek liberal general Alexandros Mazarakis-Ainian, who in September 1936 noted with regard to the causes of the Metaxas dictatorship, which had been set up in Greece just over two weeks after the outbreak of civil war in Spain: "The fear of communism by the bourgeois classes and the events of Spain made many prefer to lose their liberties rather than their money."[6]

III *The ideological impact of the Spanish Civil War on Greece*

Mazarakis's comment directly refers to the ideological impact which the unfolding Spanish *stasis* had on Greece. The historically keen interest which Greeks had demonstrated in Spanish affairs intensified after April 1931, when the liberal-republican press in Athens hailed the advent of the Second Republic in Spain as proof of the bankruptcy of the institution of the monarchy and the virtues of democratic republics. Conversely, in 1935 the Carlists, the classic right-wing Catholic party in Spain, were arguing that monarchy was the trend throughout Europe at the time. When asked for evidence, they pointed to Greece, where in November 1935 the Second Greek Republic had been abolished and George II restored to the throne.[7] From July 1936 on, the Greek press embarked on a daily and lengthy coverage of the civil war, sustained until the end. Censorship under the Metaxas dictatorship meant that all

---

[5] R. Carr, *Modern Spain 1875-1980* (Oxford 1980), p. 1; N. Svoronos, *Επισκόπηση της Νεοελληνικής Ιστορίας* (Athens 1985), p. 18.

[6] A. Mazarakis-Ainian, *Απομνημονεύματα* (Athens 1948), p. 475.

[7] See especially *Ελεύθερον Βήμα* and *Καθημερινή*, 1931-36; also M. Blinkhorn, *Carlism and crisis in Spain, 1931-1939* (Cambridge 1975), p. 144; M. Morcillo Rosillo, "Οι ισπανο-ελληνικές σχέσεις και η Επανάσταση του 1868", *Ίστωρ* 6 (1993) 143-54.

Greek newspapers covered the conflict with a pro-Nationalist bias, with the exception of the liberal daily *Ελεύθερον Βήμα*, which, in return for its support for Metaxas, was allowed to present a more objective picture by publishing reports from Spanish Republican sources.[8]

The ideologues of the Metaxas regime, and occasionally their master himself, referred to the Spanish conflict in order to justify their own action in Greece on 4 August 1936. In a radio address six days after establishing the dictatorship, Metaxas told the Greek people: "None of you, except for the well-known demagogues and the deranged subversives, wants to see our land having the fate of the unfortunate Spain."[9] The dictator returned to the subject in a speech on 2 October 1936, when he established a more direct link between Spanish and Greek developments. Referring to the situation on the eve of 4 August 1936, he said that Greece had faced a very real communist threat from the local agents of international communism:

> In communism's general scheme of subversion, Greece was part of the greater game, and would have to be sacrificed when the time came, for the sake of the general catastrophe. And the time which had been decided for Greece was the 5th August. We acted in time, the previous day. You remain in no doubt about the danger which you had undergone. [...] You saw the whole game being played out before you. Witness Spain, a nation historic, courageous and proud, in order to reflect on the fate which would have awaited poor Greece.[10]

In arguing that Greece and Spain were parts of the greater game of communist subversion, Metaxas was alluding to a report which had been published in the leading royalist daily *Καθημερινή* on 23 September 1936. That report consisted of extensive details from a document which allegedly had come into the possession of the Greek government from abroad. The headlines summed it up:

---

[8] V. Georgiou, *Η Ζωή μου* (Athens 1992), p. 79; Public Record Office (PRO), London: FO 371/22371 R2032: Waterlow to Eden, 19 February 1938: Annual Report for 1937.

[9] I. Metaxas, *Απομνημονεύματα*, Τόμος Δ' (Athens 1960), p. 652.

[10] I. Metaxas, *Λόγοι και Σκέψεις 1936-1941*, Τόμος Α' (Athens 1969), p. 45.

> The full plan of the Third International for the world communist revolution is being revealed. From abroad a common fate had been under preparation for Greece and Spain. The events of Thessaloniki [in May 1936, when a demonstration of tobacco workers had resulted in the deaths of twelve strikers] were the prelude to the revolution.

At the core of the communist conspiracy lay the formation of Popular Fronts, which had brought first Spain to the threshold of a communist revolution; France was to come second, and Greece third. The path to a communist takeover in Greece had been embarked upon in early 1936, when the fifteen communist deputies in the evenly balanced Parliament voted the leader of the Liberal Party to the Presidency of the Chamber, thereby offering the Liberals the required majority to form a government. This was the beginning of the Greek Popular Front which would soon have driven the country down the Spanish abyss, had it not been for Metaxas's action on 4 August 1936.[11]

Metaxas himself does not seem to have made any more references to Spain, having apparently left the task to the ideologues of his regime. The most disagreeable endeavour to bring home the importance of the Spanish Civil War for the Greek people was an article by the journalist Achillefs Kyrou, published in September 1938 in *Νέον Κράτος*, the monthly unofficial journal of the regime. Kyrou argued that in summer 1936 Spain and Greece had run the same danger – a "Bolshevisation" plan masterminded by international communism and the "Supreme Israelite Council". The moral for the Greeks came in an assault on those liberal politicians with Republican sympathies:

> This is perhaps the most characteristic symptom of that blindness which afflicts some parliamentarians and democrats with regard to communism and which makes them not hesitate to accept the still bloodied hand of those butchers, supposedly in order to protect parliamentary convictions. It is precisely this disease which has caused parliamentarianism and liberalism to evolve into precursors [of] and prepare the ground for communism and has been one of the major causes of the bankruptcy of

---

[11] *Καθημερινή* (Athens): 23 September 1936.

> parliamentarianism. Yet this blindness cannot even in the slightest begin to alter the great importance of the Spanish struggle which cannot but end in the final triumph of civilisation.[12]

In May 1939 this was complemented by a personal eulogy of Metaxas by the Greek ambassador in Spain, the retired admiral Periklis I. Argyropoulos:

> If the left-wing Greek intellectuals were in a position to observe the Spanish tragedy and its results at close range, they would send thanks to the God of Greece, for giving You, Mr President, the moral strength to save our homeland from destruction through communism.[13]

Although these were strong and inflated endeavours to use the events in Spain as a means of justifying the Metaxas dictatorship, they do not add up to a sustained and systematic effort to exploit for domestic reasons the full propaganda value of the Spanish conflict. Considering that Metaxas and Franco shared each other's anti-communism, anti-parliamentarianism, social conservatism and non-aggressive nationalism, to account for such reticence is difficult. Perhaps no matter how useful the Spanish conflict was to Metaxas and his apologists, any sustained and systematic reference to it might have entangled Greece unnecessarily in the international dimensions of the conflict; or, perhaps more probably, Greece's unofficial activities in Spain, as will be discussed later, were incompatible with a moralising stance; or it had to do with Metaxas's contentment to draw similarities between his regime and that of the more peaceful Portugal under Salazar rather than Franco's war-torn Spain.[14] Nevertheless, from the few public pronouncements on Franco's Crusade, it is hard to deny that the Metaxas regime sympathized with the Spanish Nationalist cause. The parsimonious manifestation of this sympathy was due to the

---

[12] *Νέον Κράτος* 13 (September 1938), 1006

[13] Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry (AGFM): A/13/2 (33): Argyropoulos to Metaxas, 8 May 1939, no. 731.

[14] D. Close, "Conservatism, Authoritarianism and Fascism in Greece, 1915-1945", in: M. Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives* (London 1990), p. 209.

interplay between ideology, on the one hand, and foreign policy and economic necessity on the other.

IV *Foreign policy*

The two main concerns of Greek foreign policy in the 1930s were a revisionist Bulgaria, which aimed at securing a warm-water port in the Aegean Sea, and the Italian design for a new Roman Empire in the Mediterranean. Greek-Italian relations remained tense throughout the interwar period, as Mussolini's lack of any specific expansionist plan combined with his explicitly expansionist intent and bellicose rhetoric to create major problems of interpretation for Greek diplomats. Following Italy's bombardment and brief landing on Corfu in 1923, Greek-Italian relations appeared to improve after 1928, when a bilateral treaty of friendship was signed. Yet for Mussolini treaties were mere pieces of paper, occasionally useful as temporary expedients but with no binding value if the Duce felt that the circumstances had changed. Typical of his bullying demeanour was the humiliation he inflicted on the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos during a formal dinner: the Duce did not address a single word to him throughout, preferring instead to converse at length with the waiters.[15]

In April 1936, towards the end of the Ethiopian crisis, which raised the prospect of an Anglo-Italian clash in the Mediterranean, the alarmed Greek ambassador in Paris, Nikolaos Politis, cabled Athens that the staff of the Italian Embassy there were openly boasting that

> Fascist Italy has not only won Ethiopia. With her perseverance and her power she has also prevailed over England and from now on the commencing battle with her will continue with a significant hope of success, until Italy's final domination in the Mediterranean.[16]

---

[15] D. Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (London 1981), pp. 97, 154. On Bulgaria see FO 371/21147 R347: Waterlow to Eden, Annual Report for 1936, 1 January 1937; Y.D. Stefanidis, "Greece, Bulgaria and the approaching tragedy, 1938-1941", *Balkan Studies* 32.2 (1991) 293-307.

[16] AGFM: A/i (33): Politis to Demertzis, 4 April 1936, no. 1211. See also J. Koliopoulos, "Anglo-Greek relations during the Abyssinian Crisis of 1935-1936", *Balkan Studies* 15.1 (1974) 99-106.

In view of this double threat from Bulgaria and Italy, Metaxas wanted Greece to be capable of facing Bulgaria on her own, while in the event of a general conflict she should ensure she was welcomed into the grand coalitions. Accordingly, his government built extensive fortifications in Eastern Macedonia and embarked on a major rearmament programme.[17] Metaxas understood that Greece would need the backing of British sea power to counter the Italian threat, hence he was prepared to follow the British line in his foreign policy. With regard to events in Spain, he may have felt some sympathy for Franco, but given the extent of Italian intervention in Spain and the increasing likelihood that the Spanish Nationalists would win, the prospect of the Western Mediterranean coming under Italian influence was particularly alarming. Such fears were wholly justified, for Mussolini's intervention in Spain was the real turning-point in his foreign policy. From 1922 until the end of the Ethiopian war in May 1936, he had indeed been "running about biting everybody" – as the South African leader Jan Smuts had said of him as early as 1923,[18] yet until July 1936 he had been careful enough not to sever all ties with the predominant power in the Mediterranean – Britain. His assistance to Franco marked a break with this hitherto consistent element in his foreign policy, aimed primarily at extending Italian influence in the Western Mediterranean through what Mussolini expected to be a swift victory for the Spanish Nationalists.[19] The prolongation of the civil war was to prove a stark test for all European powers as it threatened to spark a war that would engulf most of the continent. This prospect to a large extent determined Greek official attitudes towards the events in Spain.

---

[17] General Archives of the State (GAK), Athens, Metaxas Papers, File 83: Papagos to Metaxas, 22 May 1937, no. 39585; E.P. Kavvadias, *Ο Ναυτικός Πόλεμος του 1940 όπως τον έζησα: Αναμνήσεις 2 Μαρτίου 1935-25 Μαρτίου 1943* (Athens 1950), pp. 103-4.

[18] J. Barnes and D. Nicholson (eds.), *The Leo Amery diaries*, Vol. 1 (London 1980), pp. 348-9.

[19] M. Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, 2nd ed. (London 1994), pp. 42-9; D. Mack Smith, *Mussolini*, pp. 206-7.

V *Economic necessity*

The second major factor which must be taken into account in assessing Greek attitudes to the Spanish Civil War is the condition of the Greek economy in the 1930s, which called for export activities to provide desperately needed hard currency. In the 1920s the Greek economy was strained by the efforts to absorb and integrate the 1,300,000 refugees who fled into the country in the wake of the defeat by the Turks in Asia Minor in 1922. The efforts bore fruit by 1927, when the currency was stabilised and the economy began to grow again. The growth came to a halt in 1932 as a result of the world economic crisis. The means whereby the Greek liberal government of 1928-1932 pursued economic development were highly dependent on a liberal international economic order which would permit the influx of foreign capital to finance domestic development, as well as on a high export trade which would secure the foreign exchange needed to service Greece's foreign debt. It was precisely these two economic strategies that were adversely affected by the world economic crisis. The Depression of 1929-1932 meant for Greece a drastic reduction in the influx of foreign capital as international capital movement was severely restricted, and also a sharp drop in earnings from exports; especially with regard to the latter, Greece was particularly vulnerable as 70-80% of her export earnings came from the semi-luxury commodities of tobacco and currants.[20]

Following Greece's departure from the gold standard in April 1932, the gold cover of the Bank of Greece, which in September 1931 stood at $28,847,934, was reduced to $11,231,877 on 15 April 1932 and to $2,336,000 by the end of the month; foreign exchange reserves, which in 1932 stood at 1,359 million drachmas, dropped to 49 million in 1935. To all intents and purposes, on the morrow of Greece's departure from the gold standard, the Bank of Greece found itself without any foreign exchange reserves. Emmanuel Tsouderos, Governor of the Bank,

---

[20] M. Mazower and Th. Veremis, "The Greek economy 1922-1941", in: R. Higham and Th. Veremis (eds.), *The Metaxas Dictatorship: Aspects of Greece, 1936-1940* (Athens 1993), pp. 111, 115-16; M. Pelt, "Germany and the economic dimensions of the establishment of the Metaxas Regime", *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 20.2 (1994) 41-2.

impressed upon the government the imperative need to rebuild the reserves through the revival of export trade.[21] Moreover, in May 1932 Greece declared a unilateral moratorium on all interest and capital payments. The Bank of Greece, which estimated the country's total external debt at $514,000,000, argued that this was necessitated by the fact that 80% of Greece's total export earnings and 40% of the state budget were being spent on the servicing of her foreign debt.[22] As Sir Sydney Waterlow, the British ambassador in Athens, remarked, one of the principal consequences of Greece's default on her foreign debt was that "henceforth development would have to be financed out of her own resources".[23] The collapse of external trade would force Greek governments towards the path of autarky and the desperate search for rebuilding foreign exchange reserves. The Spanish Civil War was an ideal opportunity which the Greeks seized at once.

VI *Greece's arms trade with Spain*

It was predominantly the condition of the Greek economy and some of the peculiarities of the conflict, along with an implicit fear of Italy, which led the Metaxas government to exploit to the full the money-making potential of the Spanish Civil War: the Greek state played an important role in the supply of war matériel to the Spanish Republic, as did the Greek merchant fleet in ferrying those supplies. As for the peculiarities of the conflict, the arms embargo imposed on the two sides meant that whereas the Nationalists were avidly supplied by Germany and

---

[21] *Τα πρώτα πενήντα χρόνια της Τραπέζης της Ελλάδος, 1928-1978* (Athens 1978), pp. 143, 148, 151; Library of the Bank of Greece (LBG): Tsouderos Papers, (File) 79/ (Document) 1: Memorandum by Tsouderos to the Minister of Finance, 3 August 1935; see also ibid., 77/1: "Greece's departure from the Gold Standard", 27th April 1932, Memorandum dated 9 May 1932.

[22] LBG: Tsouderos Papers, File 8/12: Memorandum entitled "Debt negotiations in London, 18th August-13thSeptember 1932"; ibid., File 12/3: "The Public Debt of Greece", 1932; A.F. Freris, *The Greek economy in the twentieth century* (London 1986), p. 81; M. Mazower and Th. Veremis, op.cit., pp. 111, 115-16.

[23] Public Record Office (PRO), London: FO 371/19516 R646/646: Waterlow to Foreign Office, 22 January 1935.

Italy, the Republicans faced considerable difficulties. Since Soviet aid was not on a par with that extended to Franco by Hitler and Mussolini, the Republic resorted to the private international arms market in order to buy and smuggle war supplies into its territory. This is where Greece, by way of her merchant fleet and Powder and Cartridge Company, proved useful and expensive.

In Prodromos Bodosakis-Athanasiadis, owner of the Greek Powder and Cartridge Company, the industrially backward Greece of the 1930s possessed the most important arms dealer in the Eastern Mediterranean, a key player in the international arms trade, and a figure of crucial importance in Greece's economic and political life.[24] The mutuality of interests between Metaxas and Bodosakis is vital to understanding not only the magnitude of the latter's activities in Spain but also the complicity of the Greek state, without which the Greek Powder and Cartridge Company would have found it impossible to send to Spain massive quantities of war matériel. In Metaxas Bodosakis found an eager supporter of his Powder and Cartridge Company, which by 1939 had received from the Bank of Greece loans totalling 1,172,519,000 drachmas or 23.45% of the total loans made by the National Bank of Greece to Greek industry; the chemicals industry, which came second in the list, received only 8.48% of the total credits.[25] Conversely, in Bodosakis Metaxas found the means of securing self-sufficiency in armaments and an internationally renowned arms dealer who could assist with the rebuilding of Greece's foreign exchange reserves.

The Greek Powder and Cartridge Company began to supply the Spanish Republican government soon after the outbreak of hostilities. Since the Republicans were in greater need of arms than the Nationalists, and since they were in possession of the resources of the Bank of Spain, Bodosakis was quick to smell the profit. The first order for 5,000,000 cartridges came from the Republican government in mid-September 1936 – precisely at the

---

[24] FO 371/21888 E5675: Report by G.D. Cocorempas, 2 September 1938; Frank Gervasi, "Devil Man", *Collier's*, 8 June 1940, 17.

[25] M. Dritsa, *Βιομηχανία και Τράπεζες στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου* (Athens 1990), pp. 274-82, 440.

time when the Greek government was issuing a Royal Decree banning the export of arms to Spain. Metaxas grasped that the foreign exchange benefit from such deals would be enormous, as the Spaniards paid for the total value of Bodosakis's supplies immediately and in hard currency, while Bodosakis's imported raw materials and machinery from Germany were paid for 50% in hard currency and 50% through clearing. The profit was big and quick, and therefore Metaxas at once offered Bodosakis all necessary assistance.[26]

The economic importance of the Spanish Civil War for Greece and for Bodosakis cannot be overstated. His Powder and Cartridge Company expanded massively: in 1936 it employed 600 workers, in 1937 10,000 and in 1939 12,000; and by 1938 it had become one of the leading firms in the international arms trade business, had won a world-wide reputation and was regarded by the Americans as the largest and most modern munitions industry in South-Eastern Europe and the Middle East.[27] Then Bodosakis's activities contributed significantly to the increase of Greece's depleted hard currency reserves. As Spain plunged into a protracted civil war, demand for war supplies grew to such an extent that while Bodosakis's plant was working on the first order, a second one arrived for 20,000,000 cartridges. In 1937, when more orders arrived, the plant reached a daily production rate of 1,000,000 cartridges, and even that was soon raised to 2,000,000. To keep up, Bodosakis even bought ready cartridge-shells, brought them in transit to his plant in Athens, filled them with powder and immediately despatched them to Spain. To do so, according to his biographer, he needed

> direct assistance from the state [which] he secured with no delay. Having the official assurance of the [Metaxas] government that

---

[26] V. Sotiropoulos, *Μποδοσάκης* (Athens 1985), pp. 153, 154-5; AGFM: A/1 (1) 1936, File 2: Royal Decree, 22 September 1936: "On the prohibition of export of arms and ammunition to Spain".

[27] M. Pelt, "Bodosakis-Athanasiadis: A Greek businessman from the East. A case study of an Ottoman structure in interwar Greece and the interrelationship between state and business", in: Lars Erslev Andersen (ed.), *Middle Eastern Studies in Denmark* (Odense 1994), pp. 74-5; idem, "Germany and the economic dimensions of the establishment of the Metaxas Regime" (see n. 20 above), p. 49; V. Sotiropoulos, op. cit., p. 183.

> the purchased materials were necessary for the needs of the Greek army, he immediately succeeded in making agreements with German, Austrian and Swedish industries for the purchase of cartridge-shells, bullets and powder in very large numbers. Thus [...] he managed to send to Spain incredible quantities.[28]

The Spanish Republican government was so gratified that it even asked him to supply raw materials so that the Republicans themselves could produce munitions in their own factories. Bodosakis refused for fear that the Spaniards might then cancel altogether their orders for ready cartridges. But to please them, he offered to act as their agent for the purchase of rifles and artillery pieces from other countries, ordering them ostensibly for the needs of the Greek army; he even persuaded the Greek government to sell to the Spaniards obsolete war matériel from the warehouses of the Greek army and use the profit to buy modern supplies for the Greek Army itself.[29] The extent of the Metaxas government's complicity in Bodosakis's dealings with the Spanish Republic was witnessed by Stefanos Papayiannis, a junior Artillery Officer then serving at the Department of War Matériel Procurement of the War Ministry in Athens. Bodosakis "was a daily visitor. [...] As soon as the gates of the ministry were open, [he] was among the first to walk in." Rumours at the Ministry were widespread that from the Spanish Civil War "he made a lot of money, because he took advantage of the great and urgent need of the Spaniards."[30]

Bodosakis conducted his trade in a diligent manner. Although he was not responsible for the shipment and transport of cargoes, he personally took great care to ensure that his supplies reached their destination in safety, for otherwise the Spaniards might lose confidence and stop placing their orders with his Powder and Cartridge Company. Cargoes of war matériel produced or bought by him for the Republicans were loaded onto Greek ships in the port of Piraeus and were, on paper, destined for Mexico – a country whose consulates were happy to supply false documents. Once the ships had taken on

---

[28] V. Sotiropoulos, op. cit., pp. 153-4.

[29] Ibid., pp. 155-6.

[30] S. Papayiannis, *Από εύελπις αντάρτης: Αναμνήσεις ενός κομμουνιστή αξιωματικού* (Athens 1991), p. 27.

their cargoes in Piraeus, they dropped anchor at some remote island of the Aegean, where they changed their names and documents and then sailed through Italy's Messina Straits. The Italians, the Germans and Franco knew about those shipments and protested vehemently to Athens; Metaxas habitually replied that such charges were groundless both because those ships had not loaded their cargoes in Greek ports and because their destination was Mexico.[31]

The vast majority of the war matériel which Bodosakis sent to Spain was destined for the Republic. However, at times he also supplied the Nationalists by selling them information about the routes of Greek ships carrying arms for the Republic. It was well known that some Greek ships carrying arms to the Republic, while *en route*, notified Franco's forces and their cargoes were seized by the Nationalists, whilst in October 1937 the Greek government received £600,000 from Franco. On some occasions Spanish Republicans and Nationalists were shooting at each other with ammunition made in the same factory; and the Republicans, in particular, must have been getting killed by bullets they had already paid for.[32]

By the summer of 1937 all the Great Powers knew of Greece's large-scale arms smuggling. In July the Italian ambassador in Athens protested to the Greek Foreign Ministry that a Greek ship had just taken on a cargo of 270 tons of war matériel from the military warehouses of Thessaloniki. These supplies were taken to the port by military trucks and were loaded on the ship by Greek soldiers. Then the ship sailed to Piraeus, where it took on another 370 tons of war matériel from the Powder and Cartridge Company. The ambassador claimed that the supplies from Thessaloniki were bought by the Company and that both cargoes were destined for the Republicans.[33] By August the Foreign Office had learnt that the Company "has recently been working continuously on orders for ammunition for the Spanish

---

[31] V. Sotiropoulos, op. cit., pp. 156-7; M. Alpert, *A new international history of the Spanish Civil War* (London 1994), pp. 107-8; V.G. Krivitsky, *I was Stalin's agent* (London 1939), p. 105.

[32] S. Papayiannis, op.cit., pp. 27-8; F. Gervasi (see n. 24 above), pp. 17, 49; FO 371/21146 R6780: Waterlow to Eden, Enclosure, 7 October 1937.

[33] AGFM: A/1/1 (5) 1937: Note by D. Kapsalis, 23 July 1937.

Government". The "principal agent" in these transactions was George Rosenberg, son of the former Soviet ambassador in Madrid, Marcel Rosenberg. George Rosenberg, "an agent of the Spanish Government", was "constantly visiting Greece" to get "in touch with one Bodosakis".[34]

The internal records of the Metaxas administration confirm the essence of such charges. In September 1937 the Sub-Ministry of Public Security informed the Foreign Ministry that the Jew Alberto Levi, a Spanish national who lived in Thessaloniki, had recently been sailing on board a ship carrying war supplies; the ship was seized by the Spanish Nationalists and Levi was sentenced to death as a smuggler. In a casual manner the Greek security services put it on paper that Levi had been acting as a middleman between the Greek state and the Spanish Republican government for the purchase of war supplies.[35]

While Greece was denying all charges of arms smuggling, by the end of 1937 Bodosakis's dealings with the Republicans were so extensive that in order to make the necessary arrangements, he was travelling abroad at least once a month. In November 1937 he even went to Barcelona to meet the Republican Minister of War. After two days of negotiations he returned to Greece with a contract to supply the Republicans with munitions worth £2,100,000.[36] In the same month a diplomat from the British Embassy visited the Powder and Cartridge Company and found it in the process of "being considerably enlarged", with new machinery "being installed in every available space". This expansion was due to the fact that the plant "has been working on a 24-hour schedule for some time past chiefly to supply orders received from Spain." Bodosakis himself boasted to his British visitor that indeed his "factory was working full time on orders from Spain."[37] Although there are no figures on the amount of profit made by the Greek Powder and Cartridge Company in 1936 from its trade with Spain, a recent analysis based on the agree-

---

[34] FO 371/21344 W15733: Draft Memorandum by Shuckburg, 16 August 1937.

[35] AGFM: A/I (33) 1937 File 3: Sub-Ministry of Public Security, Aliens Department, to Foreign Ministry, 9 September 1937, no. 75/11/4/19.

[36] V. Sotiropoulos, op. cit., p. 157.

[37] FO 371/22354 R18: Report by S.R. Jordan, 17 November 1937.

ment concluded in Barcelona in November 1937 suggests that for the year 1937 alone the aggregate value of its exports to the Republican government amounted to 1.2 billion drachmas.[38] This figure becomes even more important as it refers solely to the value of his trade with the Republic and not to that of his trade with the Nationalists. No doubt these activities meant that only the export of tobacco outranked ammunition as a source of government income.[39] In his annual report for 1937 the British ambassador in Athens noted that the export of arms and munitions from Greece had risen "by leaps and bounds, and proved a fruitful source of foreign exchange", for the Greeks had been "thoroughly successful" in their "main preoccupation": "to make as much money as possible by selling war matériel to both sides, and chiefly to the republicans."[40] Metaxas's co-operation enabled Bodosakis to supply them even with heavy guns, ordering them from a third country, usually Germany, and asserting that their destination was the Greek army. The necessary documents for such major arms purchases were signed by members of the Greek government and, sometimes, even by Metaxas himself.[41]

The lucrative trade continued unabated until late 1938. One of the most striking documents about Greece's contribution to the arms trafficking in Spain is the minutes of a meeting between an official of the Greek Sub-Ministry of Public Security and Maximo José Kahn Nussbaum, the Republican Chargé d'Affaires in Athens. In January 1939 Kahn Nussbaum asked to contact the Sub-Ministry "through Alexandros Davaris, who is carrying out the despatches of ammunition to Red Spain". Kahn Nussbaum asked for the resumption of "the supply of military equipment from Greece which had already been taking place through Czechoslovakia, and which in the past month had been

---

[38] M. Pelt, "Bodosakis-Athanasiadis", p. 75; V. Sotiropoulos, op.cit., p. 157.

[39] F. Gervasi, op. cit., p. 17.

[40] FO 371/22371 R2032/762/19: British Embassy, Athens, Annual Report for 1937.

[41] V. Sotiropoulos, op. cit., pp. 153-6; General Archives of the State (GAK), Athens: Metaxas Papers, File 14: Argyropoulos to Metaxas, 30 May 1938; M. Pelt, "Bodosakis-Athanasiadis", p. 76.

suspended due to the military operations which are still continuing." The Greek official told him to discuss the issue with the appropriate Greek minister, and this is where the story ends in the Greek Foreign Ministry files.[42] The elusive Alexandros Davaris was at that time joint-owner of a ship along with Bodosakis; and Bodosakis, according to an American journalist who in 1940 investigated his activities in Spain during the civil war, was "a sleeping partner [... in] a Greek steamship company exclusively engaged in arms traffic with Spain".[43] Davaris, then, must have been a key figure in the Greek arms smuggling to Spain and a close collaborator of Bodosakis.

VII *The role of Greek shipping*

With regard to Greek shipping, historically its origins can be traced in the running of commerce in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. These two seas saw much of the traffic of arms to Spain, and by virtue of its dominant position in these quarters, the Greek merchant fleet was from the start likely to play a prominent part in ferrying supplies to Spain. Moreover, as the merchant shipping was the most important revenue-earning branch of the Greek economy, in April 1936 Metaxas had pledged to work for its interests.[44] Thus the role played by Greek shipping in Spain was almost as important as that of the Powder and Cartridge Company. The first piece of evidence relating to the transport of war matériel by Greek ships emerged in late October 1936, when the Soviet Union began to aid the Republic. On 26 October 1936 the German Foreign Ministry warned the Greek ambassador in Berlin that, according to German intelligence, four Greek ships had just unloaded in Alicante Soviet war

---

[42] AGFM: A/13/2 (33): Sub-Ministry of Public Security to Foreign Ministry, 28 February 1939, no. 76/65/7; attached, Intelligence Bulletin of 4 January 1939, no. 36/421/2.

[43] F. Gervasi, op. cit., 17.

[44] LBG: Tsouderos Papers, File 72/2: "Monetary and credit policy of the Bank of Greece, 1935", Report by H.F.C. Finlayson, 31 March 1936. See also G. Harlaftis, *Greek shipowners and Greece 1945-1975: From separate development to mutual interdependence* (London 1993), pp. 1-2; idem, *A history of Greek-owned shipping: The making of an international tramp fleet, 1830 to the present day* (London 1996), pp. 3-103.

supplies for the Republic. At the same time the Greek Foreign Ministry learned that "individuals [who were] in contact with the Soviet Government [were] aiming at the freighting of Greek ships to carry war supplies to Alicante and Barcelona."[45]

The files of the Greek Foreign Ministry contain a variety of information about the complex operation whereby Greek merchant ships supplied the Republic. From their port of departure they received certificates allowing them to sail to the French port of Sette, where they remained until they received a coded radiograph from some small French fishing vessels which, under the pretext of fishing, were sailing in Spanish waters; the real mission of those French fishing vessels was to notify the cargo ships at Sette whenever there was no Spanish Nationalist ship in the area and sailing was safe; upon receiving the "all-clear", the ships sailed from Sette to Barcelona, where they unloaded their cargoes. From Barcelona each ship was escorted by a Republican warship until she had abandoned Spanish territorial waters. The Greek government knew that such activities brought "enormous profits" to the Greek merchant marine, as the value of the freight of a single trip was almost as high as the value of the ship herself.[46] Whereas in October 1936, when Soviet aid began to flow to the Republic, mainly Soviet and Spanish ships were used, by 1937 more vessels were needed, with the result that foreign ships, especially Greek ones, were widely used. Greek shipowners took on the accompanying dangers because the freights, which before the civil war amounted to three or four shillings per ton, had by 1937 risen to thirty or even forty. Also in 1937 the domination of Gibraltar by Franco meant that the only route for the Republic's supplies was

---

[45] AGFM: A/1 (1) File 2: A. Rizos-Rangavis, Berlin, to Metaxas 26 October 1936, no. A/20982; A/1 (1) File 3: L. Melas, Director of Foreign Ministry, to Sub-Ministry of Merchant Marine, 28 October 1936, no. 21126; *Documents on German foreign policy 1918-1945*, Series D, volume III (London 1951), no. 118, 13 November 1936. The text of the Royal Decree of 22 September 1936 in AGFM: A/1 (1) File 2; see also ibid., File 1: Ministry of National Economy to Foreign Ministry, 12 September 1936, no. 103217.

[46] AGFM: A'/i (2): Department of State Defence, Piraeus Branch, to Department of State Defence, 29 November 1936, no. 75/2/3.

from the Soviet Union through the Dardanelles; the ability of the Republic to defend itself depended entirely on this route. In the preceding months the route had been used extensively, which is why Franco and Mussolini decided to patrol the Dardanelles and torpedo Spanish and Soviet ships and terrorize vessels of other nations.[47] The results of this decision transpired in December 1937, when the Greek ambassador in Ankara reported that in the past few weeks almost no Spanish or Soviet ships had sailed to Spain with supplies. While some fifteen Spanish vessels were immobilised in Odessa, "the ships carrying cargoes to red Spain [were] mainly under English or Greek flag."[48]

The activities of the Greek merchant fleet aroused Franco's fury, which by May 1938 was evinced in the "relentless" persecution of Greek ships by his Navy.[49] Argyropoulos, the Greek Agent at Franco's headquarters, filed successive reports on the Generalisimo's "outrage" and "indignation against Greece [for] supplying the reds".[50] To illustrate it, he even sent Metaxas a photograph supplied to him by Franco's Interior Ministry. The photograph showed four corpses, apparently Spanish Nationalists killed by Greek-made bullets, and on the back the following message was typed in French:

> Standing in the main square of Salamanca there is [a] plaque in cast iron to expose at some future date the transparent collaboration between the so-called President of the Council, Metaxas, and his associates, Diakos, Bodosakis, etc.[51]

---

[47] AGFM: A/I (33) File 3: D. Drosos, Légation Royale de Grèce aux Pays-Bas, The Hague, to Athens, 25 August 1937, no. 565.

[48] AGFM: A/I (33): R. Rafail, Ankara, to Athens, 1 December 1937, no. 3940.

[49] AGFM: A/13/2 (34A): Argyropoulos, San Sebastian, to Athens, 11 July 1938, no. 233.

[50] AGFM: A/13/2 (34A): Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Servicio Nacional de Política y Tratados, Burgos, to P.I. Argyropoulos, 27 May 1938; ibid., Argyropoulos, Burgos, to Athens, 28 May 1938, no. 11091.

[51] GAK: Metaxas Papers, File 14: Argyropoulos, Burgos, to Metaxas, 30 May 1938, "confidential letter".

Another penalty which Greek ships suffered was the sharp increase in insurance premiums, as they were considered far more likely to be attacked by the Nationalists. This led many traders to avoid chartering Greek vessels.[52]

But as the activities of Bodosakis and Metaxas did not abate, the wrath against Greece and the exaction of vengeance upon her merchant ships increased in the autumn of 1938. Franco was adamant that supplies to the Republic from France and Greece were prolonging the war, therefore as long as Greek ships and the Powder and Cartridge Company continued their trade, the Nationalists would wreak their revenge on Greek vessels. Argyropoulos, who at the same time had the unenviable task of protesting to the Nationalists about the persecution of Greek ships, wrote to Metaxas:

> the root of the trouble is the activity of our Powder and Cartridge Company. It is not up to me to judge whether the hard currency benefits are greater than the damages to the [Merchant] Marine [... But] it is not fair to refuse any discussion while we are arguing that we are the unfairly dealt with [αδικούμενοι], but in actual fact we are the ones who are treating others unfairly [αδικούντες].[53]

Relations between the Greek government and the Spanish Nationalists improved only after February 1939 as a result of military developments in Spain. By then it was clear that the Republic had lost the war, and already towards the end of 1938, seeing that orders from the Republicans were dropping, Bodosakis was turning his attention to the war between China and Japan with a view to supplying the Chinese.[54]

VIII *Greek diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War*

Finally, there remains one last aspect of Greek attitudes to the Spanish Civil War to be examined: whether Greek diplomacy

---

[52] AGFM: A/1 (35): Simopoulos to Sub-Ministry of Merchant Marine, 3 August 1938, no. 2121; A/1 (35): A. Lousis, Greek Shipping Co-operation Committee, London, to Simopoulos, 10 August 1938.

[53] AGFM: A/1 (35): Argyropoulos, San Sebastian, to Athens, 6 September 1938, no. 331.

[54] V. Sotiropoulos, op. cit., pp. 176-7.

was in a position to correlate the foreign policies of the Great Powers in the Western Mediterranean with their policies in its Eastern half. Indeed, the Spanish Civil War was a key episode in Europe's slide into war in September 1939, for the attitude of Britain and France inspired neither trust amongst potential friends nor fear amongst likely enemies; the end result was that the Spanish Civil War weakened the two western powers in the eyes of both friends and enemies whilst strengthening Italy and Germany.[55] Moreover, considering that the Ethiopian Crisis had elevated the Mediterranean into the likely battleground between Britain and Italy, the link between the two halves of the region, especially during the Spanish Civil War, was manifest, for most of the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean perceived Italy as a threat to their national security and Germany as the economic overlord of the Balkan Peninsula, and relied on Britain and France for their security.

Upon the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War Greek diplomacy inevitably focused on Italian intervention. Whereas Metaxas seems to have avoided any comment on the issue, the views of Greek diplomats make interesting reading because of their complacency and inability to interpret the motives of Italian foreign policy. As early as August 1936 the Greek Chargé d'Affaires in Rome was certain that Italy wished to defuse any international complications arising from Spain so that the Fascist regime could direct its attention to more vital issues. In November 1936 the Greek Chargé in Paris cabled Athens that the real interest of the Spanish Civil War for Europe was to ascertain whether the Soviet Union would succeed in setting up a communist state in the Western Mediterranean or whether German and Italian policy would prevent an "adventure jeopardising the civilisation of the West".[56]

Charalambos Simopoulos, the Greek ambassador in London, was content to take his lead from the British. In October 1936,

---

[55] See Willard C. Frank, Jr., "The Spanish Civil War and the coming of the Second World War", *International History Review* 9.3 (August 1987) 368-409.

[56] AGFM: A/1 (6) A. Dalietos, Rome, to Athens, 25 August 1936, tel. no. 1607/θ/10; A/i (7) S.N. Marketis, Paris, to Athens, 26 November 1936, no. 3853.

commenting on the Italian threat in the Mediterranean, he reassured Athens that British public opinion had no sleepless nights after Mussolini's statements about Italy's armaments programmes because the Duce was exaggerating "for domestic reasons". Confused about the international implications of the Spanish conflict, Simopoulos even argued that "Greece is minimally interested, if at all, in this whole Spanish business"; at the same time he recognized Spain's "crucial importance for European peace" and urged Metaxas to "assist the work of the Great Powers and especially that of Britain".[57] The Greek ambassador exemplified this during the meetings of the Non-Intervention Committee in London. While discussing the violation of the policy of non-intervention by Italy, Germany and Portugal, Simopoulos, like most other members, was "deeply shocked by the unceremonious lying" of the Italian and German representatives. But, according to their Soviet colleague,

> in the meetings they all remained obstinately silent, keeping their eyes on the green cloth of the table, [...] all petrified with fear of the "Great Powers".[58]

Much closer to understanding some of the implications of Italian actions in Spain came Nikolaos Politis, the Greek ambassador in Paris, who in March 1937 warned Metaxas of the dangers stemming from the irrationality of Italian foreign policy:

> What is excluded by cool logic, is at times imposed by a developing passion which may reach complete blindness. The boldest, the maddest, the most unrealistic plans, fomented in a period of excitement, also become [the] object of [a] psychosis capable of creating the illusion of the possible and the feasible. The obsession to dominate the Mediterranean may unfortunately lead the rulers of Italy to such an illusion.[59]

This assessment may be contrasted with that of the Greek Chargé in Rome, who in July 1937 argued that Italy was

---

[57] AGFM: A/10/6 (26): Simopoulos, London, Athens, 14 October 1936, no. 2669; A/1 (3), File 9, Simopoulos to Athens, 3 March 1937, no. 588.
[58] I. Maisky, *Spanish notebooks* (London 1966), pp. 58-9.
[59] AGFM: A/1 (8) 1937: N. Politis to Metaxas, 6 March 1937, no. 870.

undoubtedly an element of stability with regard to the strong Slavic Bloc on Greece's northern borders, whereas Britain remained the only power capable of guaranteeing Greece's independence in the event of "serious complications" arising from an Anglo-Italian clash in the Mediterranean.[60]

One of the most striking examples of the difficulties which the duplicity of Italian foreign policy was creating for the Greeks came in November 1937, when George II met with Ciano in Rome. The Italian Foreign Minister impressed the Greek King when he assured him: "As there is nothing to separate Italy and Greece, I count on Greek friendship." Then Ciano noted in his diary:

> In any case the line of advance drawn by destiny is Salonika for the Serbs, Tirana and Corfu for us. The Greeks know this and are frightened. I don't think my kind words succeeded in effacing the idea from [the King's] mind. It is, after all, an idea for the realization of which I have for some time been working.[61]

IX *Conclusions*

In attempting to summarize Greek attitudes to the Spanish Civil War, it is necessary to revert to the concepts of ideology, foreign policy and economic necessity. The ideology of anti-communism, social conservatism and anti-parliamentarianism meant that the Metaxas regime had every reason to sympathise with the Nationalists. Yet when it came to any form of practical support, ideological sympathy was not enough to force Greece to keep quiet or to use whatever assets she possessed to assist Franco, for the realities of foreign policy and economic necessity compelled her to adopt an attitude contrary to what ideological sympathy might have suggested. Italian intervention in Spain, along with Italian designs on the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean, dampened down any enthusiasm which the Metaxas regime might have felt for the prospect of Nationalist victory. Though it was never spelt out, and perhaps not even fully appreciated, the Greek fear was always alluded to: in the event of Franco's victory Italy would increase her influence in the Western

---

[60] AGFM: A/1 (A/i) (3): A. Dalietos, Rome, to Athens, 13 and 20 July 1937, nos. 1953 and 2030.

[61] *Ciano's Diary 1937-1938* (London 1952), p. 27.

Mediterranean and could more easily attempt to challenge Britain for the control of the East. In terms of foreign policy, then, Italian intervention in Spain and the Italian threat throughout the Mediterranean led Greece to a cautious attitude and cancelled out any active sympathy for Franco.

Moreover, any expression of active sympathy towards Franco was made even more unlikely because the financial opportunities presented by the Spanish Civil War and Greece's need of hard currency combined to turn the conflict into a goldmine which the Metaxas state exploited to the full. Greece had the means to oblige the Spaniards: a first-class merchant fleet with a long history of successful activity in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean – the Republic's main supply route – and Bodosakis's Greek Powder and Cartridge Company.

Given the furtive nature of the activities of Metaxas, Bodosakis and the Greek shipowners, it is hard to find any detailed figures relating to profits. In June 1939 Argyropoulos reported that a total of twenty-six ships had been seized by Franco's navy during the civil war.[62] More must have successfully completed their trips to Republican ports. Overall, the available evidence from a variety of sources leaves no doubt that from an economic point of view the Spanish Civil War proved a bonanza for the hard-currency starved Greece of the 1930s. Insiders were quick to admit it; in January 1941 the Naval Attaché of the Greek Embassy in London wrote that between 1914 and 1939 the Greek merchant marine "made large profits only in cases of crises, as in the Spanish Civil War, the war of China etc."[63]

In 1936 the rise in Greece's imports of grain and the expenditure required for servicing the external public debt led to a large outflow of hard currency. In 1937 the drastic measures taken by Metaxas led to a considerable improvement, with hard currency reserves rising from 355 million drachmas in 1936 to 887 million drachmas in 1937, 690 million in 1938 and 712 million in

---

[62] AGFM: A/13/2 (34A): Argyropoulos, San Sebastian, to Athens, 8 June 1939, no. 806.

[63] LBG: Tsouderos Papers, File 166/18: "Report on the Greek Merchant Marine during the Present War", by Captain K. Alexandris, 5 January 1941.

1939. In 1978 an official publication of the Bank of Greece admitted that "in the increase of hard currency receipts [...] an important role had also been played at that time by an extraordinary political event abroad, the civil war in Spain."[64] Bodosakis's biographer concurred, albeit in more patriotic terms:

> Our national economy greatly benefited from these Spanish orders. Many of the needs of the state budget were met by the exchange which was imported. In other words, it was not just Bodosakis's dealing, but a national mobilisation of the broadest nature with an enormous financial impact on the numerous needs of the whole [of Greece]. [Needs] which our anaemic state budget could cover with great, very great difficulty.[65]

If there was a failing in Greek attitudes to the Spanish Civil War, it was an inability to grasp some of its international implications. In this the lead was provided by the one great power with the greatest influence in Greece; if Britain opted for appeasement, the small, vulnerable, dependent and insecure Greece would have to go along. This is not an attitude that a realist could possibly criticise. But when it came to Italian foreign policy, complacency and gullibility prevented most Greek diplomats from appreciating that Italian aggression, whether in the Western or the Eastern Mediterranean, stemmed from the unpredictability of its agent as well as from the links between foreign policy and the ideology of fascism. The gullibility and complacency of most Greek diplomats was summed up by Giorgos Seferis in June 1940:

> those who are in the swing of things are content that the Duce, in declaring war, said that he would not harm us if we do not give him an excuse. For that night, and who knows for how many more weeks, these words are their gospel and their talisman. Not that they do not have the intelligence to understand how hollow these promises are, but you think that they have (they do have it) the feeling – a kind of superstition – that salvation depends on

---

[64] *Τα πρώτα πενήντα χρόνια της Τραπέζης της Ελλάδος, 1928-1978* (Athens 1978), p. 151.

[65] V. Sotiropoulos, op. cit., pp. 158-9.

> the faith that they appear to give to them. [...] Ruses which have a vogue until the blade reaches the nape.[66]

The critique seems apposite if one recalls that since November 1937 the Duce and his son-in-law had been working towards Corfu for themselves and Thessaloniki for the Serbs; that at exactly the same time the Duce had told Ciano: "When Spain is finished, I will think of something else. The character of the Italian people must be moulded by fighting";[67] and, finally, that for them the shortest road to Greece was through Albania.

University of Central Lancashire

---

[66] G. Seferis, *Πολιτικό ημερολόγιο, Α': 1935-1944* (Athens 1979), p. 17 (14 June 1940).
[67] *Ciano's Diary 1937-1938* (London 1952), pp. 27, 32.

About the contributors

Philip Carabott is Cyprus Hellenic Foundation Lecturer in Modern Greek History at King's College London. He has published a number of articles on the political and diplomatic history of modern Greece. He has edited *Greece and Europe in the modern period: aspects of a troubled relationship* (London 1995), *Greek society in the making, c.1863-c.1913: realities, symbols and visions* (forthcoming, Aldershot 1997), and is co-editor of the journal *Ἴστωρ* (Athens).

Ruth Macrides is a lecturer in Byzantine Studies in the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, University of Birmingham. She also teaches western medieval history and modern Greek literature at the University of St Andrews. Her publications include a number of articles on kinship, law and literature in Byzantium from the eleventh to the fourteenth century, and on the nineteenth-century reception of Byzantium in Britain and Greece.

Irene Philippaki-Warburton is a professor of Linguistics at the University of Reading. Her main interests are in linguistic theory, phonology, morphology and syntax, with particular reference to Greek syntax. She is the author of many articles and books on linguistics, including *Εισαγωγή στη θεωρητική γλωσσολογία* (Athens: Nefeli 1992) and, with Brian Joseph, *Modern Greek* (London: Routledge Croom Helm 1987). She co-edited the papers of the First International Conference on Greek Linguistics held at Reading in 1993: *Themes in Greek linguistics* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins 1994).

Guy Protheroe is a freelance musician working in classical and commercial music as conductor, arranger, singer, writer and musicologist. He has worked with many Greek composers, in particular Iannis Xenakis, whose music he has conducted in concerts and recordings. He has also worked closely with

Vangelis, as musical director and arranger, and with other Greek popular artists. In 1989 he organized a Greek Festival at the South Bank in London, and in 1990 a Festival of Byzantine music. He is currently planing a festival to focus on the literature of the Byzantine era.

David Ricks teaches at King's College London and is co-editor of the journal *Dialogos*. His publications on modern Greek poetry include *The Shade of Homer* (Cambridge University Press 1989) and forthcoming articles on Solomos, Seferis, Anagnostakis, and the poetry of the Second World War.

Thanasis D. Sfikas is a lecturer in European History at the University of Central Lancashire. He is the author of *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949: The Imperialism of "non-intervention"* (Keele 1994), a Greek edition of which is to appear in December 1996. He is currently working on Greek-Spanish relations during the Spanish Civil War and co-editing two volumes on ethnicity and nationalism in post-Cold War Europe.