Cypriot tragedy: a forgotten episode by Bill Sutherland



As things are now, we are almost DESTROYED, thanks to the super power called America. Probably we shall have to start from the beginning again.

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"There is only one power that can move the Turks-the U.S.," a high British official has remarked. Yet the Turkish forces in Cyprus have not budged.

Staff Writer

While President Ford and Secretary Kissinger maintain that funds should be directed to Turkey to make negotations possible, Congress remains unconvinced, and is expected to vote down the compromise to delay ending aid to Turkey Dec. 10.

Meanwhile, the island remains divided by Turkish occupation, and many Cypriots have still been unable to return to their

This summer, Dr. Peter Phialas, UNC English professor, and his family visited relatives who live on Cyprus. During the overthrow of Archbishop Makarios, the Phialas family left, later learning that many of their relatives were forced to flee to refugee camps during the Turkish invasion.

Following are excerpts from letters to Phialas from his brother, a Cyprus resident, who fled with his wife from the second Turkish attack.

"As things are now, we are almost DESTROYED, thanks to the Super-Power called America. Probably we shall have to start from the beginning again . . . We do not

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know yet how the political settlement will be, but we hope for the best, at least we want to go back to the house. A lot of suffering lies ahead in Cyprus for everyone no matter what will happen. We strongly feel we belong there and although we are now here in Athens, our hearts are wholly in Cyprus."

On such a small island as Cyprus, tragedy is communal. It is difficult to believe what happened: a country with a standard of living equal to that of America overthrown by ghettoed Turks supported by an outside

The tragedy began innocuously. When one woman of the island learned that Nicholas Samphsom, Makarios' usurper, was assuming power of the Cypriot government, she laughed trying to imagine "a stupid hired gun" running the country. But fighting was soon imminent, and weathering the first attack, the Phialas family remained in Famagusta, until the cease-fire broke down.

"We hear and read that (the) Turkish army with local Turkish people are looting and destroying several houses in the occupied lands, and we believe that our houses could be also looted. If this is true, you know that all our belongings in the house, some 50,000 pounds in value, must be gone."

In fear of the approaching Turks, the

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entire Greek population of the Eastern third of the island (about 180,000 people) fled to temporary refugee camps. These were set up within the Greek territory south of a line from Lefka to Famagusta. But supplying sufficient food for the camps became a problem, because most of the stocks were in the Turkish-occupied part of the island.

"The refugee problem is a most acute one, and becomes more tragic with winter coming. Can you imagine thousands of people, whose ways and standards of living were as good, not to say better, than that of the average American citizen, now lying in the open, sleeping under trees, without any clothing on their back, as they were unable to lift anything from their homes, penniless, sick, etc., waiting anxiously (for) the moment to return back home and see if there is anything they can salvage?

"For eight days during the trouble, we slept under a carob tree in an orchard somewhere near the British Bases. For some nights we fed ourselves on a small tin of sardines shared by six of us... However things are now quiet (for) a bit, but they may flare up again any moment. I cannot describe the human misery and human pain watching thousand(s) of innocent people mostly women and children lying in the Refugee Camps, with no protection over their heads and exposed to the summer sun, to the dust and to the filth! Some of them starving for days ... food supplies are rare so we went to

Lamach today to find something to purchase. The Red Cross is sending some small supplies but these are entirely a drop in the ocean ...

"In the 20th century how can one understand a nation of 35 million people attacking a small island of some 400,000 Greeks? The giant Goliath invader with tanks, planes, warships and a fully equipped army of 40,000 attacking a small "David" with a few guns built in 1940 and an untrained Army of some 15,000 youngsters. How can the human mind conceive (of) and accept this catastrophe which is now done to this small and unprotected island? 200,000 innocent people being driven out of their homes and gathering for survival trying to save just their lives. And how America could stand there still, allowing this to happen with American planes, bombs, tanks, etc.; all paid for by the ordinary American citizen?

Though the Turks were not interested in seizing the whole island of Cyprus, the eastern third of the country was severely attacked. Whole cities were evacuated as the Turks scoured the towns in active demand for their claim of 30 or 40 per cent of the land. In Famagusta, once known as the Princess of Cyprus, the luxury hotels are mostly hubble and the harbor is burned out. Nicosia, too, was severely bombed, but the hardest hit was the once-beautiful fishing village of Kyrenia. In the rural areas, animals are today starving and the crops, rotting in the fields, because the farmers cannot return to their land.

The beautiful isle has traditionally paid a high price as various powers have sought control of its strategic position in the Mediterranean. Again the people of Cyprus must wait for the battle lines to be withdrawn so that everyday life may be resumed.

"Even at this moment of misery, we are all proud to be Greek Cypriots. Let them take away our land and property, but they cannot take away our spirit. This will last and belong to us forever."

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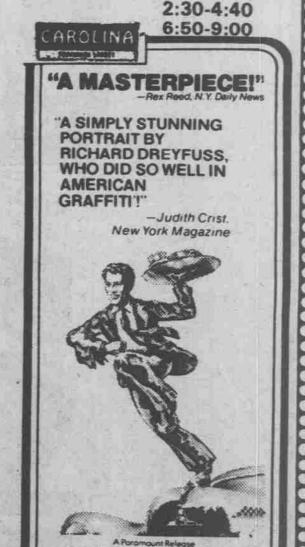




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