Rina Catselli

REFUGEE in my homeland

Cyprus 1974

Translated by David Bailey
Truth is a bitter medicine for all hours.

31 December 1974

New Year’s Eve in a place that is not mine, in a house that does not belong to me, trying to stifle the cry from my dangling roots as they seek to return to the soil in which my ancestors had planted them 40 centuries before.

I await the New Year without any wish for happiness. I await it with one humble request: that it bring less pain and less injustice than this one. Just that.

1 January 1975

Today I re-read the short note I wrote yesterday and I think that in it I signed off the most harrowing year I have lived through. Today, New Year’s Day, my husband, our little daughter and my mother went to Nicosia to visit some relatives. I pleaded tiredness and did not go with them. I stayed home because I wanted to write a self-contained biographical narrative about the year that has passed, using my diary as raw material. I have written two others up to now. One about my father, immediately after his death, and another when an acquaintance of mine, a wanted man, was killed in 1958 fighting for the freedom of our island, Cyprus. Now, in 1974, I have no specific loss to mourn, but something worse. For me, and for so many thousands of other inhabitants of Cyprus, the year passed proved to be multiple death of people and things. Perhaps for that reason I now feel the need to dedicate it to a separate biographical narrative, which I hope will survive and not be lost to foreign looters like some of my other diaries. I had no difficulty in choosing a title, it came by itself and is simple: ‘Displacement, 1974’, the most tragic chapter of my life.
I. Peaceful times

Homer’s world, not ours.
W. H. Auden, ‘Memorial for the City’

I have always liked to keep a diary but not regularly, subjecting it to the routine of daily life. I have an exercise book into which, whenever I feel the need, I let my personal thoughts and experiences overflow. I had one at the beginning of 1974. It was my 32nd, titled ‘Gleanings from thoughts and experiences of my life’. Had it survived I would know exactly with what thoughts I entered the New Year, but it too was lost in the terrible crucible of multiple loss that 1974 gave me.

Anyway, the year began peacefully in our household with modest family happiness, as in more or less all the homes of my little town, Kerynia. I remember that my little daughter first grasped the meaning of time in a cheap diary I had bought her, while in Sophronis’ eyes saw boundless fatherly affection and pride. Naturally we had our worries—who has not? Sophronis worked in the biggest hotel in Kerynia, the Dome. His salary was good, but we owed some money as we had bought a car. He asked me at that time whether it would be a good idea to carry out some general repairs and to add another storey to our house. He had a longing to build an upper storey, though I found our little place very comfortable. It is just outside Kerynia, to the west, and around it is a small orchard of lemon, orange and other trees which provide us with abundant fruit. During the last few years, in fact, we had sold a little fruit and in this way recovered the cost of their cultivation. So, I told him that it was not necessary and that it would be better to wait until our daughter was a little older.

Alongsides his job and earning a living Sophronis was involved in the affairs of the Athletic Association of the town, while I struggled with my

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1 The British recorded the name of the city as Kerynia or Kyrenia. Today, according to the UN Convention on Geographical Names, the city’s approved name is Kerynia or Keryneia.
still painting. Just a few months before I had taken some
woodcarving and thrown myself enthusiastically into the
Carving of Cypriot motifs.

We found us, in the little town, which had been founded 32 centuries
ago by some Greek from Achaia, an orgy of building took place.

Local, blocks of flats and hotels shot up everywhere. Tourism
blossomed and in spite of the drought the fields bore fruit thanks to the
industriousness of the Kerynians.

In February Sophronis took some leave and spent it working in our
orchard, while I enjoyed the early sunny spells on the veranda of our
house with our daughter. Our life continued normally in the wonder of
the Cyprus spring. Our garden blossomed and our vine put out fresh
leaves and microscopic clusters of grapes, which we sprayed regularly.
With the springtime growth in tourism Sophronis had more work to do,
while I was engaged in carving my first Cypriot carved wooden chest.

However, worry over the unsolved Cyprus problem continually
tormented us. It was always on our lips whenever we happened to be
among our acquaintances. The previous year I had re-read a new edition
of the History of Cyprus and I saw that what was happening today on
our island was no different from what had happened in ancient times
between the Assyrians and the Egyptians or from the situation in the
14th century, between the Frankish Lusignans and the Genoese. The
only difference is that now we, the indigenous inhabitants, feel greater
pain because Greece, too, is mixed up in our affairs.

At the beginning of 1974, especially, many strange things were going
on around us. We saw fellow countrymen wanting to monopolise our
Greekness, shouting at every opportunity ‘Enosis, enosis!’ while at the
same time their material standard of living increased with their
fanaticism. Seventeen-year-old schoolboys were insolent to their
teachers. Their wallets were full of money. People on fixed incomes,
who had previously just scraped a living, suddenly acquired plots of
land, flats and expensive luxuries and comforts.

The Greek officers, who served as instructors in the National Guard,
embraced these ‘patriots’ more affectionately than they did us, who sat
and discussed our national question with less bombast and more
common sense. We had one or two of their families in our
neighbourhood. Sophronis used to talk with them and always stated his
opinion fearlessly:

“Yes, we want Enosis and we shout for it, but we have made many
mistakes. We ourselves introduced the Turkish factor into the Cyprus
problem. It didn’t exist until 1955 and now it is too late to remove it
because the Americans have taken it up and are using it as a shield for
their own interests.”

The Greek officers just stuttered when faced with the logical
arguments of Sophronis, but afterwards they put him down in their
green register. As we learned later, they had three such registers: a blue
one for the ‘patriots’, a green one for those who were lukewarm, and a
red one for those who were their declared enemies. Yet I was sure that
Sophonis was a much more genuine Greek than they were.

What about me? Even though I never spoke rudely to anyone and my
door was not closed to any family from Greece that happened to rent a
house near ours, still I avoided them. It was not only the dictatorial
regime that separated us. It was also their conceited manner and the
limited range of their conversation. Naturally, I did not expect to meet a
Greek officer’s family that would be able to discuss Romanesque art,
the painting of Giotto or how da Vinci made use of chiaroscuro in his
pictures, but at least to go beyond ‘How do you do?’, ‘How are you?’
and ‘What’s the fashion this year?’ And if you did decide to make the
best of it and sit and have a coffee with them for once, they would
come out with some clever remark that would really make your day! At
one such get-together someone from Greece told me characteristically:
‘Your little girl is very nice; she has intelligent eyes like those of Mr.
Papadopoulos!’

In addition, there were all those vulgar slogans with which they
covered the army camps, such as: ‘Greece of the Christian Greeks’. An
acquaintance of mine completed the phrase, characteristically: ‘Greece
of the Christian Greeks catholically protesting!’ He was not wrong.

There was the question of the Church, too, which had been a scandal
for years in Kerynia since it had become the focus of patriotic
chaunism and misuse under the pretext of various supposedly
patriotic aims. The actual problems of the Church were being neglected:
parishes and villages remained without priests; churches fell into
disrepair and were left to crumble. On the other hand some clever
operators, acting the super patriot, exploited the property of the
Bishopric, while, in Kerynia, the Bishopric palace itself was on the point
of collapse. No reasonable person in our entire district could agree to

2 G. Papadopoulos was one of the colonels who overthrew the democratic government
of Greece on April 21, 1967. He was the dictator of the Greek Junta until November 1973.
the perpetuation of this carcinoma and everyone, except for an insignificant minority, became actively involved in the election of a new Bishop. Naturally, as a member of the Athletic Association of Kerynia, Sophronis, too, was involved. On the eleventh of February I sent a letter to my uncle in America in which, among the other family news, I related: "... We are having problems these days with the elections for a new Bishop of Kerynia. A certain Kykkotis has come as locum tenens. He is an educated man who was the director of the Religious Seminary in Nicosia. I think that eventually he will be the new Bishop. Five priests of our district, who consider Archbishop Makarios unfrocked and who call him 'Mr. Mouskos', are causing all the problems. Those five, since they cannot hold services in church, hold them in various private houses and so create a situation which could provide the raw material for an original theatrical tragic-comedy'.

Two months later I informed my uncle of developments in a letter which I sent on the fifth of April:

'... Last Sunday we had the enthronement of the new Bishop in Kerynia. An enormous number of people came, some seven thousand. I am very much afraid of the situation at this time, though. The intercommunal talks have stopped. Greco-Turkish relations have become strained because of the discovery of oil at Thasos. In similar circumstances, the storm usually breaks over outstanding issues like the Cyprus problem - that is to say, over us. The way things are going, we Greeks are going to bring Cyprus to confront something similar to the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922, God forbid!

The other day Sophronis received a threatening letter, anonymous naturally. It is the first one he has received and it is obvious that it originated from the circle of the five narrow-minded priests, who didn't want a new Bishop of Kerynia to be elected. They were angered because, at the enthronement, another Bishop made a personal attack on the secretary of our Bishopric, who in essence has been its dictator since 1931, revealing that this secretary had exploited the physical weakness of our former Bishop and had placed himself above the Bishop.

In any case, our Bishopric is in a sorry plight. It owes between 400,000 and 1,000,000 pounds and the dictatorial secretary refuses to this day to provide clear accounts. Its real estate property has been reduced to one third and it is estimated that 100,000 pounds will be needed for the renovation of the Bishopric palace. I don't know how it will all be cleared up...'

The threatening letter had shaken us up a little, even though it was ridiculous. Sophronis had never done any harm to anyone. He looked after his job, saw to his Athletic Association and like every free person had his own opinions. Everyone was filled with foreboding, especially our nephew Kokos who worked at the same hotel, the Dome, as Sophronis. One evening, when he came to our house and we showed him the anonymous letter, he said we should be careful and that it would be better if Sophronis withdrew from the council of the Athletic Association. I disagreed with Kokos. 'We love for our country and work for its benefit. We must not be bound by fear, otherwise we would not deserve to live,' I told him. Kokos fell silent. He is young and had just returned from abroad. For all that we, too, were filled with foreboding, both Sophronis and myself.

We just did not believe, though, that it would reach a fratricidal level. We knew of the civil war in Greece after the 2nd World War, but we said, 'No, it's not possible that we Cypriots could go that far. We are not kalamarades'. By that we meant that we were more genuine Greeks and that we would never sacrifice our age-old bonds of race and kinship in order to take up arms against each other. We thought that no Greek Cypriot, however fanatical he might be, would do such a thing; especially in our little Kerynia where we all bumped into each other every day. Naturally, there were some who did not greet us and who clearly showed a hostile disposition, but we considered that the natural result of their different views and nothing more.

With the coming of summer I completed the first Cypriot carved wooden chest and I was overjoyed. Besides that, I also went bathing in the sea ten times at Five Mile Beach, west of Kerynia. I preferred that location because it was sandy and the water was shallow. I took my daughter and went by bus. It was tiring and time-consuming, considering that the sea was only half a mile away opposite our house. It was rocky there, however, while at Five Mile the little one built sandcastles and began to float on her own in the shallow water. She liked it very much.

At the beginning of July we had an unexpected present from

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3 Michael Mouskos was the name of Archbishop Makarios III before he became a monk.

4 Kalamarades: mainland Greeks.
II. Intermezzo

of Inhuman Stupidity and Suffering

That which is natural is the microbe. Everything else, health, integrity, purity, if you like, is a fallacy. The good man, he who infects hard by anyone, is the man who has the fewest losses of attention. And it needs tremendous willpower, a ceaseless tension of the mind, to avoid such losses.

Moses, The Plague

Sophrones had arranged for our little girl and myself to have a week's holiday in the mountains. It was nothing extravagant, just a modest little hotel in a small village where there were quite a lot of animals around, donkeys, goats, and hens. However, there were also a lot of walks which I enjoyed very much. But I did not do anything. I just sat in the garden, drank tea, and watch the donkeys going to and from the manger. As I was pregnant, my daughter and I came down from the mountains in the second week of July. Naturally, I could not go to the sea anymore. I had no choice but to lead a sedentary life. I had previously suffered severe miscarriages and I did not want to lose the baby this time. There were only a few flowers in our garden but we were not used to them. We felt joyful in advance that we would have many very healthy black grapes.

Yet the next day was not the best for Nicotra. She was on leave and was going to Nicosia to attend the conference on human rights. I had breakfast with my daughter and then went to the morning news bulletin, my daughter was waiting for the children's programme to begin. Suddenly, as I was making the beds in my room, I noticed that the telephone had stopped ringing. I tried other stations and when I was sure that it was not the fault of my radio, I picked up the telephone. It was out of order, the line was cut...

At once I realized what was happening and I wondered what would become of Sophrones who had set off for Nicosia. I quickly closed up the house and took our little girl, went on foot to my family home. There I heard the first military marches. My mother lived there and my brother had been studying at a university in Greece. He had arrived just a few days before and he was bending over the radio, looking very pale. He knew better what the break in the regular transmission meant. As a student, he had lived the last few years under the oppression of...
the Junta in Greece in all its intensity and had taken part in the student resistance against it there. At that moment, though, I was thinking only of my husband.

'I must hire a taxi and go to Nicosia to find Sophronis,' I said.

'I'm coming with you,' replied my brother.

I left my daughter with my mother and we proceeded to Hellas Street, the main commercial street of Kerynia. There we saw Sophronis driving round in his car. We waved to him and he stopped.

'I was going to get a taxi to come and find you. Have you heard the news?'

'Yes. They stopped me outside Nicosia and told me a coup was taking place so I decided to come back.'

'Fortunately!....'

'I saw the Kerynia squadron of commandos heading for Nicosia, armed to the teeth.'

'What for?'

Sophronis sighed.

'It seems there is strong resistance there. They've reduced us to killing one another....' he said.

Then he asked me where I had left our little girl.

'She is with my mother.'

'It would be better if she stayed there. You stay there too. Our house is very isolated. You never know what might happen.'

He took us to my mother's in the car and then set off for the hotel, even though he was not working that day. It was the most suitable place to learn the latest news.

I did not sit by the radio for long. I asked my brother for a few sheets of paper and a pen. My heart was tied in knots. In the short time that had passed I had understood everything and had dried up. As I did at every difficult moment, that morning too I felt the need to sit and write down at least a part of what had shaken me, in order to find some relief. I went upstairs to the room I had before I got married, and began to write:

15 July 1974 (10.20' a.m.)

Yes, I am in my family home as in the endless days of 1963. The National Guard, says the announcement among the military marches broadcast by the radio, took power to prevent 'civil strife' and, the announcement adds, Makarios is dead. I listen to the marches waiting for the next announcement and I write calmly. 'Whose path is for the better only God knows.' We are small pawns in the game of World Senselessness. How many mothers will weep! What will become of us? I do not know. The important thing is not to lose our dignity. In all our smallness, to keep our identity: Greek Cypriots with the dignity of 40 centuries. I can say no more. My heart is tied in a knot.

2.20' p.m.

What is happening? No one knows and no one believes the announcements of the radio station. The rumours contradict each other. The Turkish radio station says that Makarios is alive and that he has gone to the headquarters of the United Nations. A short while ago the church bell of Archangel Michael's rang out, and now shots can be heard.

What do you do when your homeland is in turmoil? The cypriot radio station is broadcasting marches. I have never hated any music as much as I hate that now.

I am upstairs in my family home watching over my daughter until she falls asleep. I would like to go to the hotel to find Sophronis but I am unable to do so for the moment.

Oh God, save our land, save Cyprus, protect us.

2.45' p.m.

I went out onto the roof of the house. Burning summer heat and the

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5 The author is referring to the intercommunal fighting between Greek and Turk Cypriots during Christmas of 1963.

chirruping of cicadas. Down in the distance the Greek flag flies over the castle of Kerynia and all around it are armed soldiers, ready at the first command to kill their Greek brothers. Already they were close to opening fire on the women and children who had gone to a mass meeting.

"From out of the sacred bones of the Greeks..."? What had emerged from the bones of the Greeks? Civil strife, dictatorship. A long time ago freedom emerged. A long time ago... If only a little common sense had emerged. Common sense and brotherly love...

The Bishopric of Kerynia, although quite a long way off, is on the same level as the roof of the house. The new Bishop was inside. A number of people had found some guns - I do not know where from - and had gathered there to offer resistance, but they quickly realised that it would be futile. A tank took up position in front of the building. They say that the first operator refused to obey the order to open fire and so his own Greek officers killed him. Anyway, the tank fired a shell that opened up a gaping hole in the facade of the crumbling building. That disturbed my mother more than anything else. She is very sensitive about religious matters.

"They fired on the Bishopric? Have they no fear of God?" she asked again and again trembling with indignation. She kept going out onto the balcony to make sure.

Later we heard the Bishop's voice very clearly - they had installed loudspeakers - declaring that he was surrendering. He managed to delay his surrender, though, to give the armed youths who were inside time to leave. There remained only a number of girls, who were taken to the police station.

Among the youths who managed to get out was my brother. He came home still holding the gun they had given him. All three of us, my mother, my brother and I, stood behind the shutters of a window looking towards the Bishopric, which they had now 'occupied'.

"Now I am armed," said my brother, 'and from here I could wipe out all those who are walking about on the roof of the Bishopric without them realizing from where they were being fired on. But why should I do it? Do I know whether they have been placed on guard there willingly or whether they obeyed the orders of the mainland Greek officers of the Junta out of fear? What is more, they are all Greek Cypriots, my brothers. Just as I don't want my mother to have to dress in black, they won't want theirs to dress in black either.'

I heard him sigh and leave the room.

"Where are you going?" my mother asked him.

"I'm going to hand in the gun. It is better that it be put away. It may be needed in other circumstances, against our real enemies." he answered her.

I do not usually admire my brother. On the contrary, on many subjects we do not agree. At that moment, though, I was proud of him. His conscience would not let him commit fratricide, even though he had lived through all the idiotic horror of the Greek Junta during the last few years. In the evening I saw something else from the roof of my family home that broke my heart. Behind the peak of Saint Hilarion the beautiful forest of Prophitis Elias and of Gomaristra was burning. Before I got married it was my favourite spot for walks and mushroom gathering. It seems that the supporters of Makarios and those of the Junta had joined battle there and started a fire. A fire no one was interested in putting out. No time left....

The next day I returned to my diary:

16 July 1974 (8.45 a.m.)

We slept - in a manner of speaking - in my family home. In the morning we washed and tidied ourselves up and listened anxiously to the different versions of events: Makarios is alive, he is dead, the new president, the Makarios supporters arrested, the EOKA 2 supporters freed... I did not shed a tear. Why should I? Did the stupidity and fanaticism deserve a tear? There are some who say that if the Turks came, perhaps it would not be much worse!

What about the programme of the 'new government'? The same, the same external policy. The same policy with one difference... Really, what is that one difference?

At least let the events, now that they have happened, help to open the eyes of the fanatics. A little common sense and a little humanity would do no harm.

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7 From the national anthem of Cyprus. The two verses of the anthem come from a much larger poem, the 'Hymn to Freedom', by Dionysios Solomos.
In the afternoon the curfew was lifted for a short while and I went home to feed the hens and my caged budgerigars. While I was away they searched my mother's house. It seems they had got wind of my brother. My mother had been through such an experience before, during the EOKA period, when we were fighting against the colonial regime of the British and I had filled the house with illegal publications and, at times, with weapons and explosives. However, as she assured me that same evening, the search made by our own people was the most horrible experience she had undergone, even though she had nothing illegal in her house.

17 July 1974

I am at home for just a few hours, to wash some clothes in the washing machine, etc. In the morning the radio was broadcasting slogans for the new regime, while Archbishop Makarios - who is alive - is going to the United Nations to seek justice for us.

The minority that carried out the coup has been seized with national masochism. In order to impose their views they do not hesitate to spill fraternal blood and to trample underfoot all those who think differently as if they were worms. God and Christ! How far we are from common sense, which demands respect for human existence and free will.... Only the other day I read a historical article about the 'Attempts to de-Hellenise Cyprus through the centuries'. I think the most serious one took place just three days ago. As the English radio station has said, since the 'new regime' is not changing the foreign policy, doesn't even mention 'Enosis', why the bloodshed? In order to replace the President, the Council of Ministers and the principal members of the Government?

As Sophonis said, though, if the only aim of those few fanatics was to get rid of Archbishop Makarios, why didn't one of the 'super patriots' gamble his life by going to the church, turning himself into a living bomb if necessary, to kill him? It seems that there was not even one among the 'super patriots' who possessed an ounce of self-sacrifice.

These last few days have been among the most bitter of my life. A handful of people have assassinated the Hellenism of centuries. Countless young people will not agree to live in this beautiful place under the oppression of tanks. I do not blame them. The cream of the Greek Cypriots will seek refuge somewhere else, where they will be ashamed to admit that they belong to the Greek race.

Sophonis told me that I should be careful what I write in my diary. What should I be careful of? Kerynia is a small place and everyone here knows who I am.

That same morning I sat and wrote a letter to a well-known 'super patriot':

Kerynia 17 July 1974

Sir,

I have always respected the convictions of others, whatever they might be. I have nothing against you and I continue to respect you. However, as those who have the same political convictions as you did not respect mine and, wanting their own to be imposed, did not hesitate to shed fraternal blood and to prevail by violence. I wish - if human wishes are still respected - that you no longer interest yourself either favourably or unfavourably in my painting and my pictures.

Unfortunately Greek blood, shed by Greeks, now separates us. It is of no significance who prevails. The blood has been shed. A certain poem says: 'Honour has no value and so joy to him who lost it early, he will now be well placed in society.' I, unfortunately, did not, as far as was in my power, lose it early and it is too late now for me to part with it, either here at home or imprisoned in the castle of Kerynia. I assure you that neither now nor later will I ever be seized with the national masochism that would make me kill those of my brothers who disagreed with me politically. I believe it to be more honourable and easier to be killed by them.

In the afternoon, before the curfew, which had been ordered by the 'new regime of national salvation', I returned to my mother's house.

8 John Negrepontis, 'Honour has no price', from his collection Of the Petite Bourgeoisie (Mikroastika).
She had recovered from the cruel tribulation of the search of her house. She had been helped by the fact that she had shared out the corn crop from her small field. It is not large, only a couple of acres of flat land outside Kerynia with a few almond trees around it. She sowed it in partnership with a Turk from the village of Temblos. We had known him for years. Originally, he lived in Vasilia, but after the disturbances of 1963–64 the Turkish Cypriot leadership forced him and all his other fellow villagers to leave there and move to Temblos, which is closer to Kerynia. He had come that afternoon and they had shared out the crop. My mother had received five hundred okes and the Turk seven hundred. The extra two hundred was the seed corn which my mother should have given him at the beginning. She related to us how the Turk had told her characteristically as she offered him a cup of coffee: ‘Madame Eleni, we want neither mainland Greeks nor mainland Turks. Let them leave us alone.’ She put the corn in an empty room on the ground floor. When Sophronis came and saw it he advised her to sell it, but my mother was proud of the produce of her field. ‘No,’ she said. She would make pourgouri, she would make trahanas, she would save it for the kolliva\(^8\) for father...

‘But five hundred okes, mother, for trahanas and kolliva?’

She, however, remained unpersuaded.

‘What is left over I will save for my hens and for yours. Why should we buy it when we have our own? The room is empty. All being well, it will be used up.’

Sophronis was on the evening shift. A little before he went to work we all gathered for a cup of coffee.

‘Brew it well, mother. At least, let’s try to have a good time before they arrest us,’ said my brother.

They had already begun to make mass arrests of those who objected to the new regime. In spite of the precedent of the threatening letter, though, Sophronis did not seem concerned at all at the possibility that he might be arrested. He drank a mouthful of coffee and said:

‘Let’s see if they make it...’

I did not understand then what he meant and I did not ask because

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\(^8\) Pourgouri: bulgur.
Trahanas: pourgouri and sour milk used to make soup.
Kolliva: boiled wheat offered at memorial services.

he left hurriedly for work. In the meantime the roads of Kerynia had become full of armed civilians who were friends of the Junta. They had put on military uniforms. Most of them were young secondary school students who had been turned into fanatics, and some others, who, in different circumstances, would have won prizes for stupidity rather than for patriotism. And so the third day of the coup passed.

18 July 1974

All afternoon I sat and watched the sun soften as it went down into the sea. It is a beautiful sight from the roof of my family home. My soul was in turmoil, full of bitterness. I thought of those who had been killed and of the authors of the evil. There had been moments previously when I had believed that those responsible should die. Sitting there at the setting of the sun, however, I had no such desire. I wished only that they would be deprived of all their power to do evil. Just that.

As I was coming down from the roof my brother told me who had been arrested from Kerynia. They were all people who had worked hard all their lives for the good of their land. Once more the castle of Kerynia is filling up with innocent victims. Why? We are an unarmed people. What are they afraid of? Perhaps of our soul, something which they lack. Perhaps they fear the person that lives within us. Perhaps... My brother added that they have surpassed the Germans of the 2nd World War in brutality.

I wonder whether Sophronis’ turn has come. Not that I am afraid, but my soul overflows with indignation. To be arrested by ‘brother Greeks’ and imprisoned in the castle of Kerynia!... We have come to this!....

Naturally, all hope is not lost. The Junta in Athens is unstable and there is a possibility that it will fall. I pray that it will! Let justice and freedom come.

Just in case, I will hide these pages somewhere.

11 p.m.

Everyone is frozen with fear. They all listen speechless to hair-raising details: the small child who, after being killed accidentally, was taken and buried secretly in a mass grave; the old man who, when he asked for the body of his dead son, was shot on the spot; the torture and
executions at the central prisons. In the Nicosia General Hospital they prevent the doctors from taking care of the wounded, just because they belong to the Makarios faction. The Presidential Palace was destroyed afterwards to cover up the fact that it had been looted. Works of art were plundered from the Archbishopric by the henchmen of the Greek Junta. My God!... Everyone is frozen with horror and is silent. Nothing is sacred to these people. And they call themselves Greeks!... In that case we must not keep that name any longer.

I have dried up. Sophonis managed to stop the letter I had posted. At the post-office he said that I had forgotten to enclose something and they gave it to him. He explained to me that there was no reason for me to be witty now as he had reliable information that they were going to arrest him soon. So I have to stay free for the sake of our little daughter, apart from the fact that I am expecting another child. I did not say anything. What could I say?

As well as the big wounds, there are the small details that hurt you too: the roads of Kerynia chewed up by the tracks of the tanks, the evening curfew... And my daughter asks: 'Is the war still on or has it finished?' What do you tell her? That what follows from now on is a hundred times worse than war?

I remember very well how I spent Friday the 19th of July. In the morning Sophonis took me to the doctor who gave me an injection to avert a possible miscarriage. He confirmed the rumours about the brutalities that occurred at the Nicosia General Hospital. He had been there himself the previous day. His eyes filled with horror as he related to us what he had seen.

'I fought as a volunteer in the 2nd World War. I learned the meaning of occupation in 1940 in Athens and I saw the German occupiers at first hand,' he told us. 'But what is happening now at the General Hospital is unimaginable. Mainland Greek soldiers, swearing and threatening, hold guns over the doctors and tell them who to treat and who to leave to die. Unimaginable!'

On leaving the doctor's surgery we saw in the street the wife of an acquaintance of ours, a plumber, walking with difficulty to the castle, carrying a basket of food. The poor woman was near to giving birth. They had arrested her husband the previous day. His crime? He was an official of the Old Trades Unions of Kerynia.

We went home! It was strangely silent and the dust which had settled everywhere during the two or three days I had left it unattended, along with the dusty odour, created a strange atmosphere. I was not in the mood to tidy up. I went in and out of the rooms a number of times and mechanically fed the budgies. Sophonis opened the chest of drawers beside his bed, searched the drawer and picked up a cigarette lighter that he kept there. A friend of his had given it to him the previous New Year. It was gold and had an excellent watch on it. He did not carry it around with him because he was afraid of losing it.

'If the Turks come they'll find it,' he said to me, turning it over and over in his palm.

I was terrified. Sophonis had been unusually silent the past few days. Did he disregard the likelihood of his being arrested because he foresaw worse things?

'If that's the case, let's take it, let's take all our valuables from here and put them somewhere else for safe-keeping. It's isolated here anyway... Shall I take it?' I asked.

'No! Leave it where it is. Don't disturb anything in the house.' he told me, reacting strongly.

Later he went out into the garden, watered the potted plants and fed the hens while I hid the few pages I had written since the coup began among the pages of a magazine.

Late that evening, back in my family home, I sat and wrote:

19 July 1974

Turkey is threatening a landing again. And yet how different are my feelings now from other times when the same threat was uttered!... I did not even look at the sea, to find out if the fleet was coming. A large part of my soul has been dead since last Monday.

They say the Americans provoked the coup in Cyprus to strike a blow at communism on the one hand and to bring down the left-leaning Turkish Prime Minister on the other. Can anyone believe it? Only American naivety could believe in stamping out communism by such means.

And what of the rest? We hear of acquaintances that have disappeared, we hear of the seriously wounded at the Nicosia General Hospital. And this is still the beginning. Just the beginning. And if the
III. Foreign invasion

The houses I had they took away from me.
(G. Seferis, 'The house near the sea'.

The shell burst in our deep early morning sleep. We jumped out of bed and we dressed hurriedly, with trembling hands, trying to reassure our little daughter.

'So they managed to bring the Turks, the bastards!' muttered Sophronis as he pulled on his trousers.

From the corridor came the sound of my mother shouting and my brother telling her not to be afraid, that it was nothing. He was saying the same thing as we went down to the small cellar of the house.

'They aren't bombing houses, they are aiming at the army camps, mother.'

'But I saw smoke rising to the west, from the direction of your house!' insisted mother.

'There is an army camp over there, the headquarters in fact, near the chapel of Panayia (Our Holy Mother) Glykiotissa.' Sophronis remarked.

His voice was calm but his face had turned pale. When the bombing moved away somewhat, my brother went to the kitchen to make some tea. Sophronis seemed wrapped in thought. Mother was trembling nervously and could not hide it however much she tried. Our daughter kept asking what was going on and tried to take it in, opening two enormous questioning eyes. My brother shouted that the tea was ready and we went up to the kitchen. 'We are not safe at all here.' said Sophronis. 'We had better go to the Dome. There are huge cellars there

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10 Although the Turkish Government was declaring that the invasion was a 'peaceful intervention' and that its objective was to restore constitutional order in Cyprus, that same government proved truthful in the name it gave the operation: 'Attila I', for the initial phase on July 20, 1974, and 'Attila II', for the final advance of the Turkish army on August 15, 1974. The invasion 'Attila I and II' lacked nothing in brutality and barbarism compared to the invasion of the real Attila the Hun in Europe fifteen centuries ago.

11 From the collection Thrush
with four floors above them. Also there are foreigners staying there and if anything happens we'll be safe in the cellars with them.

We went to the hotel on foot, leaving the half empty cups of tea. Scores of planes roared overhead and from the castle we heard the first bursts of firing from the anti-aircraft guns. We took shelter immediately in the cellars of the big hotel, which were already full of foreign tourists and hotel employees who were staying there.

When the first shock had worn off we went up and looked around the hotel. The first missiles from the planes had fallen right on the north terrace, breaking three huge windows in the lounge and bar. However, when they realised that the resistance was coming from the castle, they turned their attention there and, apparently, were hammering it savagely. Looking out to sea we saw the Turkish warships. So close! The Turkish invasion, which had been hanging over our heads since Christmas of 1963, was now a reality. It had been delayed for eleven years, but it had come with all its savagery.

The foreign tourists watched wide-eyed, full of fear. Many people from the houses in the area began to arrive, seeking safety in the cellars of the Dome. At first, the endless, low ceilinged, underground galleries smelled of mould and oil and were filled with rubbish: broken tables and chairs and old plastic beach-beds. A long time ago, though, as I had read in some book, these cellars were tombs. Our distant ancestors had carefully hewn them out, and were resting here in their eternal sleep. Many of them had their family names on the outside, such as 'Polynikis'. We, their descendants, turned these underground galleries into cellars or used them as septic tanks. And in these days they served as shelters. Everyone found a place where and how he could. Soon, though, most of the locals went up again to learn the first news of the invasion from the radio, although such a thing was a waste of time since we were right at the point of the invasion.

We learned then the cause of the smoke which mother had seen coming from the direction of our house. One of the first shells had fallen on the house of a neighbour of ours, a lawyer. Unfortunately, it fell on the oil tank. The explosion wrecked the house completely. How the lawyer and his wife survived is a mystery. I saw them as they came to the hotel seeking shelter, smoke-blackened and with an indescribable expression on their faces. Their house had been finished that very year and they had set about decorating it with great care.

Someone gave the word that all the men should go and get weapons, to defend their country. They all rushed off, only to return disappointed.
after a while. ‘There aren’t any weapons’ they were told at the police
station. It was the same at the castle, which, as Sophonis told me, the
Turkish planes were hammering ceaselessly with missiles. All they
brought with them were three old rifles, and two of those did not work.
When one of the hotel managers saw them he was horrified.

‘But we can’t defend anything with those!’ he said. ‘Hide them at
least so as not to create panic among the foreigners.’

I saw our nephew, Kokos, and went over to him.

‘Did you go to the castle to get a weapon?’ I asked.

‘Yes!’

‘What is happening with the detainees there?’

‘They have them locked up still and are arguing whether they should
set them free or not. The detainees are calling from their locked cells to
be given arms to fight the Turks.’

‘How is this possible?’

Kokus didn’t answer. Sophonis came up then and told us that, since
our little girl was safe with my mother in the cellars, it would be a good
idea if we all helped to prepare breakfast for the foreigners. So I headed
for the hotel kitchens. In the meantime, the foreigners made
themselves more comfortable. They had found some sedatives, which
they swallowed with tea or coffee. Soon, when the pills had begun to
take effect, they were all overcome by an incredibly exasperating
apathy. I watched them walking blithely in the corridors, while below,
in the cellars, they told jokes and began to want unreasonable comforts.
They took armchairs down from the lounge with no concern for the
others, without considering that there was a problem of lack of space.
And my country was being lost!....

As the day advanced, more and more Kerynia families arrived, filling
the cellars of the hotel. Many of them were from the area of the harbour
and the castle, the main targets of the enemy. They told us about the
two hundred detainees which the officers of the coup had been holding
at the castle. They had let them out two hours after the first strike of the
Turkish planes. The detainees left the cells half dead from fright and did
not know what to do or where to go.

Around eleven o’clock in the morning we learned of the first strange
things: the anti-aircraft guns at the castle were defective. Someone had
removed parts from the guns - mainly gun sights - and the walkie-talkies
had been destroyed after a mysterious order. And all this at the moment
when hundreds of planes were flying overhead and huge transport
planes came and went continually, accompanied by scores of
helicopters. Out at sea, two miles to the west of us, the ships lowered
the special landing craft carrying troops and tanks. And they were not
the first. The Cyprus Radio was broadcasting marches and
announcements that we were winning, while the B.B.C. affirmed that
Kerynia had already been occupied by the Turks. A correspondent of that
radio station suddenly appeared at the hotel with a complete camera
crew. When someone put a radio to his ear and told him that his radio
station was broadcasting false information he picked up the telephone
and informed them that the Turkish troops had not entered Kerynia, but
the English radio station continued to broadcast that false information.

A little later we learned more. Twelve tanks had been disembarked to
the west of the village of Agios Yeorgios, three miles west of Kerynia. A
group of volunteers repulsed them, putting three or four of the tanks out
of action. The rest stayed there, like impregnable fortresses, without
daring make a move. Sophonis was at a loss. Why do they not advance
since they have disembarked and could enter the town in half an hour?
The Cypriot officer who told him about it had seen them with his own
eyes and had described them to him as monstrous things. They were
the latest type of tank that Turkey had received from the United States.

A little after midday my brother came, pale as a corpse. He had not
been afraid of the invasion. He was a reserve officer in the Commandos
and had passed through the most difficult army exercises during his
training. He had found out things that were unheard of, though. He took
me aside. His chest was heaving.

‘What is happening isn’t a war,’ he told me, ‘it’s a sell-out. They have
sold us out, sister, they have sold us out!’

‘Impossible! How...’ I began to say.

‘I went to the commander at the headquarters, along with some
others, and do you know what he told us? “Hold each other’s hand and
proceed. As soon as the Turks see you they will fall into the sea.” And
he was sitting calmly under a tree. Another mainland Greek officer
confirmed that there were no weapons. I saw some ammunition and,
taking a van, from a private house nearby, I offered to transport it to the
guard posts. They gave it to me and I took it. Everything is falling apart
and I swear that it is deliberately so. The mainland Greek officers won’t
lift a finger; they aren’t giving any orders. The only ones who are fighting
like lions are the ordinary soldiers and the volunteers who have found
some old rifles God knows where. As I returned to the headquarters
they had brought ammunition, lots of ammunition, in huge army lorries.
I sighed with relief and acted as if it were not necessary, but I told the man to put it in the kitchen, and I took it with me to the room where I was staying.

The boy was about 15 years old, his name was George, and he had been working in the kitchen all day. We had a long conversation about the war and the invasion, and he told me about his family and his hopes for the future. He was very worried about his mother, who was still in the basement, and he asked me to help him get her out.

I told him to stay calm and that I would try my best to help. I returned to the kitchen and found my mother sitting on the floor, crying. I asked her if she was all right, and she told me that she had been hiding in the basement all day, but that she was now safe.

I took her to the kitchen and gave her some water to drink. She was very weak and hardly able to stand. I helped her to sit down and told her that we would find a way to get out of there.

I searched the kitchen for a way to escape, but there was nothing. I asked George to help me find a way, but he said that it was too dangerous. We decided to wait for the invasion to pass and then try to leave.

We spent the night in the kitchen, listening to the sounds of the war outside. We heard the explosions and the gunfire, and we knew that it was a very dangerous time.

In the morning, we decided to try to escape. We went to the basement and found a way to the outside. We were very lucky, and we managed to get out without being caught.

We left the island and went to the mainland. We found a way to get to the safety zone, and we were able to escape from the war.

We spent the rest of the day in the kitchen, eating and resting. We were very tired, but we were happy to be alive.

Dome Hotel, 21 July 1944

Dawn. I can barely see to write. All around war and no one is interested in stopping it.
On this second day of the invasion we are all calmer, or rather we have got used to it. We no longer took the planes very much into account and most of us went out onto the verandas to stare at them. A missile fell fifteen metres away and hit a neighbouring house, but it did not make a big impression on us.

Around midday, soldiers of the National Guard began to descend on the hotel, smoke-blackened and bitter. They asked for a piece of bread, begged a cigarette and confirmed that there was a strange and inexplicable disintegration in the National Guard! There were neither supplies, nor ammunition nor food. Nor orders! One of them whispered that the Greek officer forbade them to open fire on the landing craft. Two others said that Turkish officers met 'had a chat' with mainland Greek officers on the mountains. Were they telling the truth? Were they telling lies? My brother and I knew something about the ammunition and who had prevented it from reaching the locals, who wanted to fight in order to defend their homeland, but we said nothing.

In Upper Kerynia live about a hundred Turks, old people mostly, who displayed no hostile disposition. On the contrary we heard that they had come to an agreement with their Greek neighbours; if the Turks came, the Greeks of Upper Kerynia would be protected by the Turks; if the opposite happened, the Turks would go to the Greek families for protection. This did not surprise us. The Turkish families of Kerynia had been living with us peacefully for 300 years and it was not the first time they had allied themselves with us against their co-religionist invaders, the Yörükler, as they call them.

The manager of the Dome sent our nephew Kokos in the car to bring bread from the Turkish baker.

'Did he give you any bread?' I asked him when he returned.

'Naturally, why shouldn't he? For a year now we have been buying bread from him for the hotel.'

Early in the afternoon tourists from other smaller hotels began to arrive at the hotel: French, German and others who wanted - demanded in fact - to be fed and made comfortable. They had been informed that their embassies would protect them and that they had nothing to fear. That had filled them with self-confidence and they began to criticize the events with no shame, in front of us. A very old Englishman was sitting in the corridor that led to the basement reading a book with exceptional interest. For a moment, when he put it down, I picked it up and examined it out of curiosity. It was titled *Royal Colonial Institute* and was a catalogue of the members of that body. The year of publication was 1909!
At that time, around two o'clock, I met an exhausted acquaintance of ours, a Cypriot officer in the National Guard. He asked me for some food and I asked him what was happening. He had come from Agios Yeorgios and he was at a loss. From what he told me, my fears were confirmed once again. In the Kerynia area our army was deliberately falling apart and, worst of all, the radio did not give any instructions to the non-combatant population. It just broadcasted marches while announcing victories. Victories which we could not see anywhere. It spoke of the heroic soldiers of the National Guard, whom we ascertained to be nothing but young local volunteers, who fell victim with their old rifles. It was terrible!

After the midday meal, Sophronis persuaded me to go to the hotel room they had given us, to rest a while, because I had spent that second day, too, making cups of coffee. As I lay down and closed my eyes, I collected my thoughts and tried to understand what was really happening. Then, I suddenly recalled all those terrible pages of our history that are connected with the Turks: The end of Byzantium, the capture of Cyprus in 1571 with the massacres and the extermination of the island's Latin element. Then, I remembered the genocide of the Armenians in the First World War. I had read some hair-raising descriptions and I had heard incredible things from old Armenian refugee women. Then there was the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922 and everything connected with it, which Venezis, Myrivilis\(^{12}\) and so many others had written about. The incontrovertible documentaries of the genocide of Hellenism of Asia Minor. How many years had passed since then? Fifty whole years. In those fifty years nothing had interceded to prevent history from repeating itself. Out there were Turks who threatened to destroy 40 centuries of Hellenism in this corner of the earth.

If they would at least give us the opportunity to fight and fall in our homeland! I can do no more than repeat the same phrase: it was terrible! Sometimes language cannot express human feelings beyond a certain point. Only by recreating them in your imagination can you feel them.

\(^{12}\) Elias Venezis and Strates Myrivilis, Greek writers, the first one a refugee himself from Asia Minor.

22 July 1974

To Nicosia. Cowardly flight? No! The non-combatant population was caught in a snare there in Kerynia. It would be a pity for us to stay and be slaughtered if the Turks came. As long as no arrangements were made for the departure of the foreigners from Kerynia (tourists and foreign nationals resident in the town), the non-combatant population more or less had some security. However, yesterday afternoon they were informed that they would be taken off by boat from Six Mile Beach, east of Kerynia. The mayor of the town and his wife, who is one of the owners of the Dome, shouted that the English destroyer should also take the women and children of the town. The Englishmen began to stutter and stammer.

‘You know, we are just tourists and we have nothing to do with this war,’ they answered.

As if they had been asked to start negotiations for a ceasefire! God Almighty! The Englishman who was responsible for the transfer came. As I was taking him a cup of coffee in the manager’s office, I heard him refuse to transfer even the women who were about to give birth, although he conceded that ‘Kerynia will become a very unhealthy place to stay in as soon as the tourists and foreign nationals leave, but unfortunately we cannot take a single local resident ourselves.’

I did not hear what else he said. There was nothing left for us to do but to flee to Nicosia, even though it was very dangerous as the Turkish planes were bombing continually.

As he came out of the manager’s office, the mayor said that it would be better if those who wanted to tried to leave in their cars, taking the road to the east to Nicosia. Sophronis approached him and asked him if he would really leave.

‘Yes, I will take my family and I will leave. If I arrive safely and the road is open, I will telephone so that whoever else wants to, can follow,’ he told him.

We went out onto the veranda. They had forcibly removed the old owner of the hotel from the kitchen, where he had continued to cook for all those who had come to his hotel. He did not want to leave.

‘Why should I leave? I am an old man. I’ve never harmed anyone. The
most they can do is kill me,' he said.

Then one of his daughters-in-law came and shouted at him, pulled him by the hand, put him in the car and they set off. Along with the mayor's car about ten others set off too.

Sophronis said we would wait for the telephone call. My brother brought Sophronis's car. I got in it and he took me home to get our passports, our identity cards, etc. Within me was chaos! I saw my country convulsed by foreigners and I felt like tearing my heart out. My house was untouched, just as I had left it. I was not in the mood to take even the smallest valuable object, even though I was certain of what was to follow. What was the point of taking the silver incense burner or my other silverware, which my father had given me as dowry? What, too if I had taken two or three of my beloved pictures, or my painting equipment or the expensive tea service, which my uncle had given me? I took only the passports, a file of my daughter's, which contained her first scribbles, and just a few of her clothes. From the iconostasis I took two family icons: Our Holy Mother Hodegetria and Saint Sophronis. Nothing else. My brother, who was more farsighted, set to and packed more things, mainly clothes, his own and mother's, into two suitcases.

On returning to the hotel we waited anxiously for the telephone call from Nicosia. It was not long coming. The mayor had arrived safely and the road was open. Moreover, the more evening drew on, the safer the journey was, because in the evening the planes stopped their bombing. That was what Kokos, who had heard the telephone call himself, told us. We proposed that he should follow us in his car, but he shook his head.

'No, I'll stay here at the hotel,' he said.

'But the owners have left.'

'They haven't all left. The grandson of the old man stayed behind to look after the hotel. I'll stay with him.'

My brother tried to refuse in the same way, but I shouted at him.

'I'll come, but I'll return again,' he said finally.

So, our daughter, my mother, my brother and I got into Sophronis's car.

and my soul bled. It was dusk. Passing below the peaks of Pentadactylos I saw the mist, which was ambling over the back of the mountain like a scene from a film shot in slow motion. We did not meet any obstacles on the way, even though there were quite a number of big army lorries along the roadside, destroyed by the planes. Small, bright red flames still played about some of their tyres.

The feeling of being uprooted is heartrending. The thought that I would never return, or that, even if I did return, I would find Kerynia in ruins, made me feel that I was on the verge of insanity.

Today I am calmer because the foreigners have not left Kerynia. Their evacuation was cancelled and, as Kokos told us on the telephone, the Turks have still not set foot in Kerynia. I hope it stays like that. I am thinking of returning with my brother at dusk to help as much as I can.

The most tragic situation I confronted was not the planes and the ships, which bombarded us continuously; it was not even this uprooting. It was the boys, the soldiers that we met on the mountains as we were coming to Nicosia yesterday. They stopped us and asked for cigarettes. They were hungry and they stood ready, with battered old rifles, to shed their blood for their country, while, at the hotel, the foreign tourists were eating and drinking and making clever remarks about the situation and, at the headquarters, the mainland Greek officers were sitting under the trees doing nothing, with unheard of apathy. While Sophronis was giving them all the cigarettes he had on him, I felt my eyes burning. It was the only occasion in all that turmoil that I cried, that I shed real tears.

22 July 1974

While leaving I was wondering if we would ever return to Kerynia
IV. Prosfygia 1974

But the thinking of a refugee, the thinking of a prisoner, the thinking of a person when he too has become a commodity — try to change it; you can’t.
(G. Seferis, ‘Last Stop’).

On our first night as refugees we stayed at the house of a cousin of ours in Nicosia. Here the war was taking place one to one and a half miles away from us, towards the airport mainly.

The next morning everyone had his or her ear glued to the radio. It spoke of a ceasefire agreement. It was to take place at four o’clock in the afternoon. I sighed with relief. My brother decided to return to Kerynia alone, as he said. Until four in the afternoon our hearts were in our mouths. When the hour arrived I telephoned our nephew Kokos at the hotel. He confirmed to us that everything was quiet and that the Turkish troops had not entered our little town.

23 July 1974

A ceasefire agreement was reached at 4 o’clock yesterday afternoon. It seems that this time Kerynia paid for the damage. The Turks have opened a passage to the west, just outside the town, which runs to Temblos - St. Hilarion - Nicosia. One of their generals said on the radio that that is what they wanted and that is what they achieved.

We were in an agony of expectation that at any moment they would occupy Kerynia. It was not part of their plans, though, because at four in the afternoon they had stopped somewhere outside it. Where? I cannot tell. Beyond the chapel of Panagia Glykiotissa? I wonder.

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14 The Greek word prosfygia has no equivalent translation in to English. Means the place away from home where refugees find refuge or the state of being a refugee.

It is said that negotiations will begin among the three Guarantor Powers to reach a permanent solution. I do not believe that the Cypriots will be consulted. And if they are consulted it will be to keep up appearances. The Government of Cyprus is now under the thumb of the Greek Junta and the Turkish Cypriot leadership is the blind servant of Turkey. And those two countries are puppets controlled by America. I await the bitter confirmation of the suspicion that both the Turkish invasion and the way it was confronted were planned in the same office by the same brains.

I am sure they will have the audacity to talk of bravery, of Greek virtue and of the heroic dead. And yet, throughout this struggle I continuously had the impression of a fiasco. They did not give weapons to the Cypriots because, they say, they did not have any. Crowds of young men roamed the streets, aimlessly, burdened by the feeling that they were refused the right to defend their homeland. And those Cypriot soldiers who had the good fortune to carry arms were in secondary posts, from the military point of view. Yet there are people who believe that we won, that Greece would come and save us!

Cyprus is in ruins, and those people shout that we have won! That we came out of it winners. But the ashes of our beautiful forests that were burned are hot and burn my inside.

Just as I stopped writing Sophronis woke up, red-eyed. He had not slept except at dawn.

'And what were you doing all evening?' I asked.

'I was listening to the radio.'

He stayed silent for a little and then, slowly, told me the bad news. The Turkish tanks had entered Kerynia after yesterday’s ceasefire. The tourists and the foreign nationals would leave at dawn the next day.

Soon my brother came too, completely exhausted. He had got as far as Halefka, heading for Kerynia. There, in the evening in a little open-air café, he found all the Greek officers who served in our district gathered together, calmly eating kebabs and drinking beer. They advised him to go back because the Turks had taken Kerynia. He had spent all night returning from Halefka on foot.

We were in the depths of bitter sorrow when some neighbours of our niece came round, smiling and telling us fairytales that Greece had supposedly brought troops secretly, that they would save us, and a whole lot of other idiocies. I do not know how I controlled myself. Sophronis and my brother were seething. Finally Sophronis gave the signal: there was no point in staying in Nicosia. It would be better to move to Limassol, where his elder sister lives. In less than ten minutes we set off for Limassol.

How I found the courage to sit and write that afternoon I do not know. And yet there is a note:

23 July 1974

There is nothing, neither right nor justice nor human rights. I ask myself whether human beings, as we have understood them so far, exist. What has happened? That which I had foreseen some time ago: a second Asia Minor catastrophe. Now my family and I are refugees, victims, and we have come to Limassol with almost nothing. In Kerynia the Turkish flag flies and most of the Greek Cypriots who have not left the town are penned up in the big hotel. What else should I say? Is it necessary, or has it any importance if I say that they took Kerynia after yesterday’s ceasefire agreement? It is better that I do not say anything.

Sophronis’s sister has been settled in Limassol with her family for many years. She bent over backwards to look after us, but that just made me feel more distressed.

24 July 1974

We have become ‘luxury’ refugees and that is the worst kind of refugee to be. If we had material needs to take care of we would forget for a few moments or, at least, put aside our misfortune for a while.

The only pleasing - pleasing! - thing is that they rounded up most of the Kerynia people who stayed behind and put them in the Dome Hotel under the protection of the United Nations. But the outrageous thing is that our radio is still triumphant and refuses to tell the truth. I have an acquaintance who works at the Broadcasting Corporation. I telephoned today and asked him to connect us with the person responsible for the news bulletins. It was a Greek officer! I gave the telephone to Sophronis so that he could tell him the pertinent facts. My ear was glued to the receiver, too.
'What's happened? Kerynia has been occupied by the Turks? Really? How did you know that? If you left because you were afraid, come to the General Staff of the National Guard and we'll take you back, mister.'

The voice of the mainlander sounded ironic and it pierced me through and through. Sophronis did not argue. He put down the receiver.

Kerynia has been trampled by the Turks. We are faced with a smaller-scale Asia Minor catastrophe and they do not say it. They dare not recognize reality: the Turks entered Kerynia after the ceasefire. They are slaughtering us and they demand that we do not make a sound!

In Greece, the Government has changed. In Cyprus, the democratic government is again back in power. I do not believe in miracles, and yet we must hope.

25 July 1974

I do not know the name of the street. Anyway, it is a small, compact house near the house of Sophronis's sister. It has furniture in it too. We moved into it without any baggage except for what my sister-in-law had lent us, a few sheets and towels and a few kitchen utensils. We bought a few necessities too: soap, toothbrushes.... It was meant that this new chapter in our lives should begin, the most painful one, the chapter of displacement.

Now that I am writing it is six o'clock in the morning. I am in the kitchen of the house. I avoid looking outside. I do not want to see anything; I cannot measure my pain. Our budgies in Kerynia will have dried of thirst and hunger. The clusters of grapes on our vine are ripening, abandoned. And the whole of Kerynia is desolate!

26 July 1974

I ache! Not only for us. I wish it were only we. I ache for all Cyprus. For the unjustly lost children, for the poverty that will come, for the tearing into pieces of every ideal, for our betrayal. What will be the future be like? I do not know. The Turks have reached Nicosia airport.

Yesterday we had news of Kokos. He is still at the hotel along with one thousand eight hundred Kerynians, with a United Nations guard outside. Many refugees have sought shelter at the village of Bellapais. Women have given birth in fields, children are without milk, adults are hungry. We here must be considered among the luckier ones.

27 July 1974:

The Turks, in spite of the ceasefire agreement, have approached Myrtou but they have not entered the village. At least they have escaped becoming refugees.

I have been thinking more and more about the suitcase with my diaries and the other papers valuable to me, which I left behind. Why? I should not have. Of course, so much is being lost and I am thinking about a few old papers. If they are lost, though, I will be unimaginably hurt. I, too, will have to be considered one of the seriously wounded, perhaps spiritually mutilated. Oh my God, so much pain! Today I cannot collect my thoughts.

29 July 1974

I have pulled myself together. Even if I lose everything in Kerynia I carry within me an unimaginable variety of impressions and experiences. I must not bend. I constitute a part of this place. Whatever is saved within me will not die if I hold on firmly.

There are moments when I wonder if it is worth the trouble for anyone to hold on, and why. It is necessary to anaesthetize your feelings and your thoughts in order to hold on otherwise you go mad.

I had better open a book in order to forget, if I can.

31 July 1974

My brother learned that our houses in Kerynia have already been looted by the Turkish soldiers and local Turkish Cypriots. I did not cry I did not even hurt. Deep down I had known it. Later I stayed alone in my sister-in-law's house with her little baby grandchild. I took it in my arms and found the strength to play with it and make it laugh. Later, when it fell asleep, I reflected on where I was: in a well-appointed house with very good, hospitable hosts, but for me it was cold. I was in a town that, without really knowing it, I disliked. And I did not have anything, not
even a fresh change of clothes.

I bend and look within myself. Now that everything has been taken from me, I feel something like liberation. Very painful, but liberation. You are no longer obliged to conform to any formality. You can cock a snook at humanity since it, its rule that might is right and the big interests have displaced you from your house. It is not indifference I feel, but a deep sense of reaction.

2 August 1974

August! A new month has arrived and we did not even realize it. Displacement continues to be more traumatic every day. The terrified city of Limassol has regained its rhythm somewhat and everyone prattles about politics. Dissent is boiling up to such an extent that you ask yourself if these people think logically. I shall never deny that I am a Christian Orthodox Greek Cypriot, but there are moments when I want to leave this fanaticised state, full of inconsistencies, as quickly as possible.

In Kerynia, the Turks are emptying the houses of everything and sending our household goods to Turkey in ships. I continue to be annoyed about the diaries I left behind, but the sooner I resign myself to the fact the better. I am thinking of starting painting again tomorrow. I have found some paper and a soft pencil. Perhaps they will help me to forget myself for a while.

4 August 1974

It was seven years yesterday from the evening that my father-in-law came and asked my father for my hand for his son, Sophronis. I remembered it but I did not mention it. When you are a refugee such things seem like so much unnecessary sentimentality.

I did something better, though: I began a series of drawings of subjects related to my recent experiences. I think it was the best thing I could have done. Life goes on and each person's goals should be pursued.

For me, there is no Greek homeland left to accommodate me; at least, not for the time being. I will not bend, though. I will close my homeland inside my heart and I will become a citizen of the earth. I will evaluate people, not homelands.

Sophronis wrote to some relations of ours in England to find out whether they can find him work. However, I think it will be difficult for him to get a work permit there.

8 August 1974

The news from Kerynia is horrendous. Apart from the looting of course, we learned of the rapes of even very old women, of the unburied dead, of the looting of churches and of them being covered with human excrement. Even English pensioners resident in Kerynia suffered harm. They knocked on the door of one Englishwoman and, as she opened it, they emptied their automatic weapons into her. Another Englishman was found butchered and his head had been thrown into another room. Someone else was killed under the rubble of his house, which was hit by a large shell.

The strange thing is that, among this disintegration, I have a desire to write poetry. I had written some poems a long time ago, but when I had shown them to a certain poet, he told me: 'Your poems are not good. It would be better if you did not write them, esteemed lady.' And I did not write any more. But now I feel that only in verse can I find relief. After all, I am not going to send them to any competitions. Today I wrote two:

INTO DISPLACEMENT
Into displacement with only my voice
which tells the horrible truths in the chaos.
Injustice is felt only by the wronged.
Displacement burdens only the refugees.
And in Kerynia the vultures eat the flesh
of the lucky ones who fell in their homeland.

ENGLISH PENSIONER
No one can say
that I did not serve faithfully and well
the King's Army in the Colonies.
Palestine, Egypt, Cyprus, Aden.
Even the Far East, the Indies.
Only that on returning I found
that the measure of my country had changed
and no longer fitted my own
- or vice versa perhaps, what does it matter -
So I chose the sun, the mountain,
the sea, the beautiful island
and in them I accommodated life and recollections.

And now with just my pension
- all my savings went on the plot of land
and on the house in Kerynia -
back in the United Kingdom,
whose measure has changed
and no longer fits my own
- or vice versa perhaps, what does it matter -
to wonder, after so much caution
and so much calculation, how I came to enter
the cheap old people's home
with the fog around me and the terrible
weather of my homeland.
Between us, it is not that bad,
because as for my neighbour,
they cut his head off.

The truth is that Great Britain did not concern itself at all about its subjects who were settled in the Kerynia District. And they were a lot.

9 August 1974

In the clinic. With a blood clot in my leg that must be dissolved before it causes an embolism. A pimple has sprouted on the boil! And what a pimple! It threatens my life. I am not afraid of dying, I am just sorry that if something like that should happen, I shall be far away from Kerynia.

It is nearly eight o'clock in the evening. They have given me an intravenous injection. At four in the morning they will give me another

one. I will try to read some poetry. The daughter of my sister-in-law gave me a book in English: Ten English poets of the 20th century. To think at this time is a deadly sin. Years ago, T. S. Eliot agreed with this:

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.16

It is such a strange coincidence that his verses should reach me at just this moment.

10 August 1974

It is Sophronis's birthday today. How must he feel, I wonder, now that he is obliged to start his life again at the age of 37? I do not know and I do not dare ask. All day in my obligatory inactivity I see our house, the so familiar part of Kerynia, every corner, every stone and it seems a lie that I cannot go. That I was born and lived there was for me the most natural thing in the world; it seems unnatural for me to be far away. I must get used to the painful rebirth of displacement. We must all bear it.

As for my health, I have been through terrible moments with pains in my leg. Maybe that is a lesson, so that I do not complain about my displacement?

16 T.S. Eliot, 'East Coker', from his poetic collection Four Quartets.
14 August 1974

I left the clinic in a hurry today. The war has flared up again. The Turks have started their bombardment again and they are advancing on Famagusta. Sophonis wanted to bring me here to the British Bases, to a farm where a relative of ours, an agriculturalist, works and lives permanently.

Outside the window of the bedroom, where I am lying down, there is a vine covered in clusters of black grapes. Neglected. It reminds me intensely of the vine at our house. Two lines of verse in English advise:

Look thy last on all things lovely,

every hour.17

And at this time when my homeland is being devastated, I must have courage to admire something, if only a neglected vine that is trying to produce black grapes.

Words are too weak to describe the infamy of our contemporary civilization, how it crushes every human feeling, how it takes the human individual into no account. At this moment the Turkish tanks are advancing again, devastating other places with 40 centuries of Greek civilization. They are shedding our blood in every kind of inhuman way. It is better if I do not think. 'I said to my soul be still and wait without hope' ....

18 August 1974

Since the morning of the day before yesterday we are back in our rented house in Limassol. Sophonis has begun to show signs of irritability. He gets angry and has no patience at all with our daughter. He avoids saying anything to me on account of my thrombosis. I am trying not to yield. If I finally manage to concentrate on painting for a few hours every day, I think I will survive, since I continue to be in bed in a state of obligatory inactivity.

It is, however, so inconceivable. In Cyprus there is a minority of a hundred thousand Turks, who have always lived harmoniously with us

17 Walter de la Mare, "Fare Well"
Greeks. Now, with the invasion, Turkey has reduced two hundred thousand Greek Cypriots to refugees and has desolated almost half our island. For what reason? Because geographically our country is situated at a strategic point in the Mediterranean...

30 August 1974

I look at the Limassolians. The good ones sympathize with the refugees. Some of them help them as much as they can. Most of them are indifferent and consider themselves fortunate that they happened to live in a place untouched by the fury of the Turks and that they have their homes and jobs. There are many -yes, there are - who are glad. I do not know why. The most naive imagine that now Limassol will become the capital of Cyprus and their property will acquire value. In the evening, when they sit out in their gardens having soirees, many gossip about uprooted families known and unknown to them, making relevant jokes and laughing loudly. By chance I experienced such a soiree.

Our nephew Kokos wrote to us, through the Red Cross, that they allowed him to go with an escort to our house and that he found it 'turned upside down'. He did not need to write more for us to understand what he meant by that. For the rest, our life in Limassol goes on with terrible uncertainty. Some acquaintances and relatives have written to us from abroad, but I am not in the mood to write to anyone.

1 September 1974

Yesterday I remembered the passage from the Gospel: 'But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal'\(^ {18}\). How well I understood that passage! Yes, the thing is not to let our inner world harden or become ugly because of the injustices perpetuated against us. To stay dignified even as refugees and to keep always our unselfish aims. And to struggle. Even if they have wronged us, we must not become unjust ourselves; even if they have looted our possessions, we must not loot our souls of whatever is good and pure.

8 September 1974

The celebration of the birth of Our Holy Mother. The festival of Glykiotissa. I went this year, as every year, and received Holy Communion. Not in the chapel of Panayia Glykiotissa, the protector of Kerynia. I went to a Limassol church. This year, the festival haunts our mind and soul. There, at Glykiotissa, no service, no festival. Neither pastry cooks nor merchants and vendors in the yard, hawk ing their wares.

Today, I prayed with all my strength that next year I would manage to be in Kerynia and that a service would be celebrated there, at Glykiotissa. My heart feels very heavy, very heavy! I will try to paint a little. Maybe I will find some relief.

PS. I have just learned that the Turks have stripped the chapel of Glykiotissa bare and turned it into a mosque.

12 September 1974

You try to forget, but the dreams of a refugee are merciless. They take you to places that you knew and give you the delusion that everything there continues to be as it was before. Then comes the painful awakening. How can you live the dream awake? How can you ignore the reports of the foreign journalists who describe your beautiful town as desolate, down trodden by Turks, without movement, with only the ghosts of those killed and the frightened eyes of your enslaved fellow townsfolk behind closed shutters, of the people who have seen and suffered so much and who do not know what they still have to face in the future!

The news has been reduced to simple and feeble verbiage. Yes, rights were violated, a large state trampled on a small one which, supposedly, it should have protected. There is not a word on the radio about the infernal, inhuman agreements. It is said that the American C.I.A. disposed of ten to twelve million dollars in order to overthrow Allende of Chile. And for the toppling of Makarios, how much did it spend, I wonder? Undoubtedly, consciences were bought, either with money or in combination with supposedly patriotic slogans. But in the face of the interests of the big alliances, two hundred thousand broken hearts count for nothing. I wonder what they feel now, those who sold themselves, if they have an ounce of conscience left that is. Of course, there is one other

\(^ {18}\) Matthew, 6:20.
interpretation: that they are such fools that they still do not see that they were bought. Despite all the poor Cypriots, though they looked like bought, in the end they chose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest. Those who bought them, did not choose death in battle. Choose death or else the rest.

14 September 1974

It is the Rising of the True Cross today. I went with my mother and my father to the church. At the end of the service there was a requiem mass for a certain commander who had fallen. It did not move me, I was just indifferent because the true cross was the most important for me. Was not it for the church holding weapons.

Looking at the large photograph of the dead youth I remembered the 510 dead who fell so unjustly around the Peak of St. Hilarion. Those who were not just a soldier, who were not just an innocent, they were just a youth. Those who were not just a soldier, who were not just an innocent, they were just a youth.

Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things. Ten thousand young Greek Cypriots were lost, in addition to the non-combatant population which was uprooted. We were two opposite things.
IN MEMORY OF SEFERIS

The nightingales didn’t let me sleep in Platres
Now wakeful in bed even without them.
Where can I hide the voice of the raven?
Where can I hide my own bitter small voice
with the terrible news?
The stones speak of gods,
men speak of pain
and of displacement
and I pour my voice into the chaos
to be destroyed.

‘Your poems are not good!
You had better not write them, esteemed lady’.
Into the chaos then, beyond the burnt mountains,
and the executed sea.
Beyond into the chaos with the corpses,
with the dishonoured women,
with the bitter small truths
which our times hide
like the used up prostitute hides her wrinkles.

With me the wakefulness and the germ
of hope for a resurrection
of the dead nightingales
which I know will never sing again.

29 September 1974

So much pain, which tears cannot contain and words cannot express.
You live life in a waiting room, without knowing which door will open
and when you will be admitted. At night, your sleep is interrupted by
agitated dreams and the explosions of bombs which are placed by
unrepentant fanatics. In the Public Gardens you stumble upon a mass of
refugees.

‘Where are you from?’
‘From Famagusta. You?’
‘From Kerynia….’
‘Did you bring something with you, at least?’
‘No, we left with just the clothes we were wearing. Overhead the
Turkish planes were attacking us continuously.’
You hear that as soon as you give an ear. And then you see many
Limassolians growing indignant.
‘I’m in a worse state than many refugees because I owe money and
I’ve got a daughter to marry off. These people came here and seek to
have a good time.’
I heard someone say that. He should have been from the parts
overrun by the Turks, to have left with the clothes he was wearing, to
have had his daughter taken by the Turks and raped repeatedly twenty
times or so and then see what he would have said. What do the refugees
seek? They do not seek anything. They do not stand in a queue in front
of the offices of the Red Cross for a little oil and a few dried beans
because they want to.
We learned that now they are sharing out our houses in Kerynia
among Turkish families. Mother took that very hard. She cried this
morning.
‘We were foolish to leave,’ she said.
If we had stayed, though, and happened to fall in an area where
massacres, rapes and desecrations occurred? Who can say what is good
and what is bad? All that is left for us to do is to pray for a just solution
that will allow us to return to our birthplace.
There are moments, though, when you cannot bear it, however much
you try to comfort yourself that you are one of the lucky ones since you
were not left homeless or hungry. I had better not go on.

5 October 1974

Sophronis is trying in vain to find a job. Where are there jobs now?....
Fortunately, there is the Provident Fund of the hotel employees and the
meagre handouts from the Red Cross. These last make mother very
indignant, above all when she hears about large and small donations for
the Cyprus refugees from various organizations abroad.

'They reduced us to beggars! We don't want them to send us
assistance; we don't want charity from anyone. All we want is for them
to let us go home, even if we find only bare walls. We are capable of
supporting ourselves on our land without any assistance,' she says
angrily.

My brother left a few days ago. A boat took the students to Greece
too, to continue their studies. He left on it. He told us not to worry
because he has many acquaintances and he was sure he would find
some work to cover his expenses while he was studying.

6 October 1974

I discovered recently that my manners have become very abrupt with
everyone. Hard words to mother, to Sophronis. When mother
announced that whatever happens she wants to return to Kerynia, I got
angry with her and spoke to her sharply. Among my close circle I was
sullen. Nothing and no one pleased me. I thought ill of almost all the
new people I met here. I feel the need to confess and to receive Holy
Communion. At this time I have longed for the end of the world.

9 October 1974

THE FALSE PATRIOT

At first it was easy:
bombastic, patrician.
Talents paid for by the month
from an unseen source.
When the time came for action
he remembered the sure path.
He found safety in the rear,
he enriched his stories.
Everyone had done something
if he said that he too did much
try to find the truth.

And be sure that all
listened to him carefully,
and be sure that some
called him a hero!

IN LIMASSOL

Your ugliness reminds us of the beauty
the river of flames
in your arrogant streets makes us despair.
City, we saw your heart
hooked on festivals
cursing the hour
that frustrated your carelessness
and now, what will you do without barbarism?
City, we hear your heart
beating bloodthirstily at nights
breaking up the dreams of our displacement.
City, you should have tried
to learn something else before we came.
Now do not try to justify yourself.
Now we know you.
We entered disguised as servants
in your kitchen
and saw the truth
lying in ambush behind
the glamorous reception halls.
No god resides within you.
We will shake the dust of the sandals
of displacement and go.
Good-bye! Good-bye and thank you!
Thank you that your ugliness
has made us love more
the beauty that belongs to us.

11 October 1974

I have just read The song that was cut off. It consists of the last messages
of those executed by the Nazis, which were set to music by Nonno. I am
seized with poetic 'inspiration' these days. I sat and wrote:

TO ALL THOSE

To all those what can I say?
'l die for justice.
For a better tomorrow....'
'Do not grieve.
Hold yourselves upright....'
'I breathe for the last time....'
'I do not fear death....'
'I go in the belief
of a better life for you....'
When I meet them today, tomorrow,
after years, what shall I tell them?
I struggle for an answer.
How shall I be able to hide from them
the looted houses,
the burnt mountains,
the dishonoured virgins?
And when they ask me:
'Well, were we right?'
What answer shall I give?
I meet them
today, tomorrow,
every day with empty hands,
without Justice,
without Freedom,
without a better life.

14 October 1974

My daughter has begun to find her feet a little. She goes to a nursery and her interests are multiplying. Recently, she has been learning the secrets of the puppet theatre. I made her some puppets and she puts on shows for us. For the moment her repertoire consists of some variations of Little Red Riding Hood.

Sophronis seems calmer now. Like all of us, he is gradually finding the strength to face the situation squarely. As for Kerynia and her mountains - No, I am not afraid for her. They have known other worse moments in their history.

17 October 1974

I have been thinking of the words of a certain acquaintance of ours in the days of the invasion:

'I shall stay. And if the Turks come, I'm willing to wear a fez, but I shall not leave my birthplace.'

This is one point of view. However, which is more important: the place or the person? Is it not better to live in freedom, without making concessions in one's conscience and in one's ideals, rather than staying in one's birthplace and living under oppression? It is a big question that may face us with a dilemma if our district remains Turkish and they allow us to return. At any rate, I do not regret leaving. I consider myself fortunate that I consciously refused to find myself having to stand in line to be counted or to be searched by the Turks.

Humanity is attached to its birthplace and we are among those most strongly attached to their land. But up to what point should we be, I wonder? Where is the borderline that separates the decision to stay in your birthplace humiliated or to leave it in order to live in freedom?

Yesterday an acquaintance of my mother's, who was enslaved in Kerynia, came and told her that many Turks have now settled in her neighbourhood. This made my mother consider seriously, for the first time, the probability that they had now entered her house and she was very upset. She said that there was no justice. She said that she would go, even if they killed her. Just so long as she could get as far as her threshold before she died. She said it would be better to put a noose round her neck and strangle herself. She said.... She said....

It was very painful.

'It is a sin to say such a thing, mother,' I told her.

'If God commits, or even allows such injustice, why should I believe in Him?' she responded.
I was silent. What could I say to her? It was she who had always told us, since we were small children, to believe in God and to go to church. In the evenings, around our humble hearth, she used to talk to us about our traditions, our legends, about Digenis, about Arodafnoousa, about the capture of Constantinople, about the marble king and the future victory of the Christians. I was silent. What could I say to her?

ADVICE

Don't tell the children of heroes and heroines,
of deeds that happened as war spread.
Search and tell them of the causes which brought
the conflict, and teach them how to avoid them.
Heroic deeds are unavoidable in war
and the most everyday person becomes a hero
when the circumstances dictate it.
It is better that logic should make
all heroism and every sacrifice unnecessary.

INVOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL

Say that nothing happened,
you simply got out
of the clothes you were wearing alone
in order to fly.
You had taken the decision so many
times previously.
As the mountains came down to crush you,
when the sea came up to drown you
and the thorns of the sun pricked you
mercilessly, you longed then for
the other light, the Uncreated, the divine.
And yet you never actually left.
Now say, even if it is late,
that you were a courageous soul.
Say that the Uncreated Light
and that alone was the great cause.
You found yourself running a few inches
in front of the shells
of the foreign invasion
with a wreath of injustice on your forehead,
with a dead Abel on your breast
and with Cain around you laughing
unpunished, but forget it.
There is no alternative.
You must say that nothing happened.
That you simply flew alone
and never mind if you no longer have the courage
for the Uncreated Light,
for any light....

22 October 1974

All these small, bitter, inhuman truths, where will they go? History will ignore them. Poetry will find them unpoetic. Prose will perhaps consider them excessive. As for the theatre, if its purpose is 'recreation', the small, bitter truths are anything but recreational. I am talking about the beating that the innocent bald café owner received. The Turks took him prisoner and cut him to pieces until they made him believe, before he gave up the ghost, that he really had killed three children and a Turkish woman. All he ever killed, the poor man, were the cockroaches in his miserable café, opposite the Town Hall of Kerynia. I am talking about the mutilations before the executions. How can you put into poetic words the ravaged cheeks and breasts of the innocent spinster from the village of Zodia, the result of repeated, inhuman rape? And there are so many small, bitter, inhuman truths in our homeland this year19.

19 A part has been incontrovertibly documented and recorded in the report of the Commission for Human Rights of the Council of Europe. The report was officially adopted by the Committee of Ministers in October 1977. Since 1974, the Republic of Cyprus has made three applications to the C.H.R. of the C.E. against Turkey for violations of human rights in Cyprus. The Commission found Turkey guilty in all three cases. Its successor, the European Court of Human Rights, in its judgment of 10 May 2001, following Cyprus's fourth and most recent application found Turkey guilty of continuing violations of human rights in Cyprus.
25 October 1974

I have been thinking of the ‘No’ that Greece said to the Italians in 1940. Now, as the 28th of October is approaching it is timely. After the recent events I have reconsidered my point of view on it.

Greece said ‘No’ and fought on the side of the Allies, and what did they give her? Freedom? Was the civil war they plunged her into, when the 2nd World War ended, freedom? Is the alignment with NATO, which has obliged her to maintain an army three times as big as she needs all these years, freedom? Was the Junta, clearly a creation of the ‘Allies’, freedom?

In 1940 the armies of two great powers swept Europe. Greece was one of the few small countries that resisted. She sacrificed herself. She said ‘No’ for the sake of the Allies who subsequently enslaved her and exploited her struggle for their own interests. They did not even give her what was rightfully hers. Why then did she fight?

The more I think about it, the more I believe that the ‘No’ of the 28th of October 1940 was masochistic! My conclusion about that day, which has been lauded by so very many, maybe unexpected, but as G. Seferis says in one of his poems:

But the thinking of a refugee, the thinking of a prisoner, the thinking of a person when he too has become a commodity - try to change it; you can’t.

26 October 1974

To the monastery, as a pilgrim! After three months of worry and exhaust fumes in Limassol, a night without traffic noise in the fresh air. It is a treat! Luxury! My God! What I miss most as a refugee are certain modest ‘trifles’: a tree, a fine day, the smell of thyme. I had them so richly in Kerynia that I never thought of them. They were like the air that I breathed.

Today is the feast of St. Demetris. The saint, on a horse, kills the enemy with a lance, which ends in a cross. For a moment I felt abhorrence, looking at the icon. Killings! So many killings for ideas that, in the end, you do not know whether they were worth people dying for. A certain hero of Albert Camus’s in The Plague asks: ‘Can one who has
taken human lives - even for the most sacred purpose - be a saint?’

At the monastery I met an old widow from Bellapais whose daughter’s husband was one of the missing. Tonight, they telephoned her unexpectedly that he had been found and was well. From the day of the Turkish invasion he had been hiding in the attics of abandoned houses and had kept alive by eating uncooked dried beans, which he found here and there, waiting for an opportunity to give himself up to a passing Red Cross vehicle. If the Turkish soldiers had found him they would have finished him off and he would have been among the thousands of other missing persons. I will never forget the old woman’s expression when she learned of the rescue of her son-in-law.

27 October 1974

Today we had news of our house. I think we must now consider it lost for good. The last time that Kokos went to see it he found two Turkish women brushing the floor. They were piling the clothes, the photographs and the books that remained in the front garden. Houses are like people: when they are built they do not know what fate awaits them, what they will go through, who will inhabit them, what they will see. Our nephew supposes that, since they are having it cleaned, they must intend to give it to the family of a Turkish officer.

The question is, do I want to go back or not? And if it were possible for us to go back now, would I be happy to return to the routine of my life in Kerynia? I do not know. Being a refugee is painful, but at the same time it is an opportunity to see your life so far from a completely different point of view. I wonder if it is right to bring up my children in a place where so many interests, which are irrelevant to us local inhabitants, clash and render it illogical. In what county shall I find some logical peace, even if it does not have the sun and beauty of my homeland?

These months as a refugee I feel somewhat useless. The vicissitudes of my pregnancy and my thrombosis have not allowed me to offer any voluntary service. I am not even useful within my own family. Last week, though, I considered it my duty (although the doctor had forbidden me to go for walks), to take part in a silent protest over the women that the Turkish troops have dishonoured and continue to dishonour. As the march came to an end I met a relative of mother’s, from the village of Motides. She was dressed in black.

‘My sister has gone to America. My mother was murdered by the Turks in Karavas. Two of my cousins are missing. How are things with you?’ she said to me.

I left hurriedly, because I felt I would not be able to bear it.

30 October 1974

The two-day pilgrimage to Kykko Monastery did me good. I returned with new reserves of energy, even if they were small. For the first time I sat and painted three allegories with Byzantine paints, which are cheap. I had done the drawings some time before. I tried to harmonize my ideas with the colours. One picture depicts an uprooted tulip of the kind that grows wild in the area of Panagra, while from the roots of the bulb rich drops of blood fall. The second is of a headless angel, with flames shooting up from its decapitated neck. The last one, ‘The Evils that came from the Sea’, has a rich blue colour in one corner, from which leap four leaden ghostly silhouettes, advancing on the door of a house with a cypress tree beside it. The cypress tree is painted in the style of those that are found on the Cypriot carved wooden chests of Kerynia. I tried to preserve an intensely Byzantine style since my materials were Byzantine paints. I worked on pieces of hardboard, which had been given a number of coats of primer. I have also glued them onto thicker pieces of wood so they are like portable icons. The best thing is that they cost so little. Besides, I have no alternative. Now I am thinking of transferring onto a larger picture another of my drawings, ‘The weeping of the Ancient Trees’. The starting point for it was some trees painted on Minoan pottery of Cyprus. I added eyes to them from which rich tears of blood flow to the slightly undulating ground.

At dawn today I had a vivid dream that woke me up. I dreamt that our house in Kerynia had a wooden ceiling, like my family home, but because the water tank had overflowed the floor was flooded and I hurriedly went to put away all the silverware. I opened the small Cypriot chest where I used to keep it and started wrapping the pieces quickly in paper and putting them away. Some of them I had never owned. I was impressed in particular by a silver cluster of grapes, which
I put away. Later, I went and informed Sophronis, who was at work, about the water tank. On returning I set to collecting bottles of expensive, rare drinks that I had found in our bedroom. They were in a big cupboard, which also contained an impressive blue vase. In all this confusion my late mother-in-law came to pay me a visit and I did not know where to put her because the floor was covered in water and the only viable place was the entrance hall. Then I noticed that in the roof of the entrance hall there was a square hole and that perhaps they were repairing the water tank there. My anxiety about where to accommodate my visitor woke me up.

Mother says that the dream means we shall hear pleasant news about our house. I do not believe in dreams, but I told her that I had dreamt it because they had put a Turkish family in our house.

Our home.... The roots of our house have been pulled up for three months now and dangle without knowing where and how they will be replanted....

2 November 1974

In bed with a blood clot again. Fortunately this time the doctor did not carry me off to the clinic.

A certain acquaintance of ours, an elderly English soldier, assured me that the Turkish soldiers looted Kerynia in the same way that his English colleagues had looted Algiers during the 2nd Word War. The Turkish hordes have done unheard of things in the parts they captured. On a much smaller scale, certain 'bravoes' of EOKA 2 did similar things too. When the roads of Kerynia were emptied by the bombardments, two louts went and broke the window of a jeweller's shop. The two thousand Turkish Cypriots who live in our district, peaceful people in the past, are now looting whatever remnants have been left in our houses, in spite of the fact that it is strictly forbidden, or so they say. Moreover, wherever they pass, they never fail to relieve themselves in the most unlikely places, exhibiting a particular weakness for cooking utensils and for churches. There is even a group of English and other foreign nationals who shrewdly creamed off the most valuable things from the houses, both English and Greek, and are now smuggling them out and selling them secretly outside Cyprus. And the houses, especially those of the...
English residents of Kerynia, contained antiques and valuable paintings. Some of them would have been the envy of well-known museums.

Well, are we honest because of fear of the law and its sanctions? Albert Camus was right: evil is the natural thing in the world; goodness is acquired. And whoever has it must keep his eyes open in order to preserve it, so sensitive and fragile is it. The jungle is our natural state and we return to it at the first opportunity. Turkey, as a state, did not need to return to the law of the jungle, because she has never abandoned it in the first place. Turkey moves from one systematic and well-planned genocide to the next, sometimes mocking and sometimes distorting international conventions and human rights. From the slaughter of the Armenians, Turkey went on to the slaughter of the Greek population of Asia Minor, to the extinction of the Greeks of Constantinople, to the savage persecution of the Kurds and the attempt to wipe out small states like Cyprus.

Tonight, through the Red Cross, a few of my diaries and family photographs reached me, which our nephew Kokos had managed to collect from the rubbish of our house. He also found the magazine in which I had hidden all that I wrote during the week of the coup and the notes I had left at the Dome. Those pages from the 15th to the 21st of July I have christened ‘Intermezzo of inhuman stupidity and suffering’. Under the title I added a few words from The Plague. It is amazing how much certain passages of that book have in common with what I wrote then, even though I was unaware of it.

14 November 1974

Through the Red Cross I sent an answer to an acquaintance of mine, enslaved at the Dome Hotel. She had censured me for my decision not to speak to the obvious perpetrators of the coup or, let us say, its obvious supporters. Those obviously responsible for the Junta in Greece are being tried. Will the people who, contrary to all democratic institutions, provided Turkey with a pretext on Cyprus’s behalf to invade our island, go unpunished? If now we pat them cordially on the back and wish them politely a good day, is it not as though we condone their actions? I do not feel hatred for them, in fact I am sorry for them. But it is a moral act and everyone’s duty to stigmatise those responsible for this inhuman stupidity.

16 November 1974

I have just returned from a short walk with Sophronis. I accompanied him to his sister’s house and returned immediately. It is a cool November night. I stole three sprigs of jasmine from a hedge. I put them in a glass of water and I have them on the little table in front of a minute copy of da Vinci’s ‘Giaconda’. The figure is printed on thin fabric. Sophronis brought it to me years ago and I had it in the drawer of the desk in our house. Every time I took something from there I would look at it and it pleased me that it was in its place. After the looting of our house Kokos found it and sent it do me along with the few family photographs he rescued. I put the little copy, print really, in a thick plastic file with a piece of white paper for background.

We have heard that there is a probability that they will compel all those enslaved in Kerynia to leave, either by plain force or psychological pressure. Sophronis was expecting this. My heart is heavy with pain. I am thinking of our nephew Kokos who has stayed voluntarily since last July, running the risk to be taken prisoner. He has suffered all the humiliations of the Turkish occupation in order to stay in his birthplace. The first time he came to see us after his studies in England, he happened to tell me that his zodiac sign is Sagittarius and I, laughingly, recited the verse of Seferis:

I too was an archer in the war; my fate: that of a man who missed his target.

I do not know why those lines came into my mind. What I am sure of is that he will be deeply hurt if his self-sacrifice and his courage to stay in his birthplace were futile; if it finally turns out that he toile for an ‘empty tunic’.

Now I understand better why I chose to leave, why I did not stay in my beloved town. I had not been afraid in Kerynia. To be precise, I had not been seized by hysteria, even though I was aware of previous Turkish atrocities. I left because, deep within me, something told me that it was useless to remain. I knew that at that moment the tunic was

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empty; that every war is pain and suffering. I was sure because, when I was very young, I had fought in the struggle of 1955-1959, against colonial rule in Cyprus, believing then that the tunic was filled with the wonderful body of Freedom. When the struggle finished I saw that all that remained were the treaties of Zurich. And those gave neither freedom nor justice. They just served the interests of other powers.

The tourists who happened to be in Kerynia during the invasion have filed suits because ‘their holidays were ruined’. They found the travel agencies take it on. Who can we file suits against?

Perhaps it seems illogical, but I feel the need to thank God for the bitter and very painful experience that He gave me. Bliss, comfort and security are riches and I would not want to lose them. But being a refugee has forced me to understand a host of things that I never even suspected. I am not a masochist or a fatalist, but if I had to choose between being the invader and the wronged refugee I would choose the latter.

My birthplace was something very solid within me. After becoming a refugee, although my love for it has not diminished, it has melted in a way inside me. My birthplace is Kerynia, but Kerynia is not just a geographical area which is now occupied by the invaders. I, too, am a piece of my town, as is my mother, as is the 40 centuries of living Greek tradition which all Kerynians carry within them.

I see clearly that the world is advancing steadily to the abyss and that I am unable to prevent it. Is it something necessary? Evil is in our nature; even inside me, who sat down tonight to write big words while a short time ago I stole three sprigs of jasmine from another's hedge!.....

20 November 1974

At this time I feel a certain change in my deeper self. My mind is turning things over continually. This was not the case before. But now, as a refugee, even when I am asleep I feel myself meditating. This gives me a strange kind of feeling. A peace spreads within me, which is not peace. But, at the same time, concepts settle which had been floating around inside me like unjust curses.

These days I have also been considering my path as a painter and what I would like to achieve with it. I found an answer tonight: I want to render, in shapes and colours, something of myself which will be universal at the same time.

Tomorrow is the name day of my daughter. I bought buns, a cake and some pastries, 23 shillings altogether. Sophronis said that I should buy something better. I think it would be wasteful. I have always lived simply! Now that we are refugees even the absolute necessities weigh on my heart, when I think that many other refugees do not have them.

15 December 1974

It is almost a month since I last took up my diary. The pain of being a refugee is always intense, but it is not shrieking as it was at first. Now it does not cry out. It settles within me, acquiring weight and depth. You appear to live normally, but, alongside the routine daily actions, the pain lives within you, gradually recalling, assimilating the extent of the calamity, which originally the mind could not contain. You remember the humble corners of your home, one by one: the small family carved chest, the picture you painted at the age of seventeen, the rock-samples you had collected from the seashores and the mountains of your birthplace, the picrolite, a hermaphrodite stone with a wonderful bluish green hue. Like its colour, its composition is hermaphrodite too, something between dolomite and a vein of asbestos. And I had many such stones: blood-red jasper, a pebble with fossils six million years old.... These humble stones spoke in their own way of how this island, my island, was made.

Then there were the collections of Byzantine copies. I just had to open my large files and admire the roots of Byzantine art in the faces of Fayoum, the works of Panselinos or the works of Cretan Byzantine art. And also, the host of photographs which I took myself: well-known and unknown wall-paintings and portable icons of the churches of Cyprus.

What happened to all of them? Refuse. I suppose that this year's Turkish invasion was the worst since the time when Kefas21 came, three

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21 Kefas was the founder of Kerynia. He came with other Greeks in Cyprus immediately after the war in Troy.
thousand long years ago, and built Kerynia. All the conquerors respected her inhabitants. The Romans had granted them autonomy. The Byzantines protected them from the Arab raids. The Franks simply enlisted them in the fiefdoms they established, and the Turks who came in 1571 exterminated the Venetians, without molesting the local Greek Christians. The British, when they bought the island from the Turks, did not evict anyone from his home. Only now have we local inhabitants been expelled from our birthplace. The twentieth century has shown itself to be more inhuman than all the previous ones together.

An acquaintance of ours (a neighbour to be exact) who is English came and told us that the Turks had killed his cats, torn up his wedding photographs - he was a newlywed - and all his other personal effects, broken the flowerpots and stripped his home bare, leaving only five or six large pieces of furniture. They had even removed the doors and windows and used all the house as a toilet, except for the toilet! The poor man was distraught and his mind just could not take it all in. He took some photographs and is taking them with him to England to show to his Member of Parliament and protest. It was on the tip of my tongue to say to him ‘And what will you gain by that?’ but I restrained myself because I did not want to hurt him any more. I wonder, will his M.P. be convinced that the ‘poor, wronged Turks’ do such things? Their propaganda presents the Greeks, not the Turks, as barbarians and oppressors. Can a provincial M.P. in England fight against the interests of the Allies and accept the truth? I doubt it.

All the enclavees who are set free to come over here speak of piles of human excrement in the churches of Archangel Michael and Panayia (Our Holy Mother) Ghrysopolitissa, in the houses, on the tables, in the cooking utensils, on the beds; in the most unlikely places. There is not one house in Kerynia that does not have a modern toilet and bathroom. Why do they not use them? From the psychological point of view, it seems to me that this action is not so much an expression of hatred as one of an immeasurable inferiority complex.

And yet, there are certain things that you cannot conceive even though they are true.

Our English friend shakes his head disconsolately and puts the photographs in his wallet. ‘I’ll show them only to my M.P. If my wife sees them she will be shocked,’ he tells us.

19 December 1974

I am terribly sleepy, while I try to understand my present position and to give an answer to a host of questions. I am a refugee in a repulsive town that is not even big enough to lose yourself in. My roots dangle and that hurts me a lot. I am reading a book about the painters of the Renaissance and my life continues. My occupations are those I had in Kerynia: painting, embroidery.

Tonight I watched a good Russian film on the neighbour’s television. Among other things, it touched on the subject of happiness. It accepted the view that happiness is to be understood by others. I think that it is not just that. It is a whole lot of other things relating to yourself. Happiness is the most subjective thing in the world. It cannot be encapsulated in objective statements, however intelligent they are. A recipe for happiness for me could be a recipe for unhappiness for another.

I am terribly sleepy!...

Christmas 1974

Our first Christmas as refugees. I pray that we shall not live a second such. We spent it without suffering hunger or cold. The others, though, I missed Kerynia very much today, although I said ‘Glory be to God’ over the traditional bowl of egg-and-lemon soup, before we started our midday meal.

Should I write about the holy child, about the miracle of love, about peace on earth? Everyone must find - must struggle to find - love and peace. Today my own soul did not kneel before the holy child. Not from lack of faith, but because for many months now it has been continuously kneeling.

In a few days we enter 1975. There are so many things that I would like to note down, but I do not have the courage. I had better stop, put my daughter to bed and continue reading the book about the painters of the Renaissance.

A certain fellow townsman, a refugee, said to us very maliciously: ‘The only good thing about displacement is that it has made everyone equal.’
The fact that everyone lost their homes and property is for him a sign of equality. I disagree! People are never made equal. What differentiates them is not home and property, nor even profession. It is their nature, their character, their morality, their cultural level, their individual abilities. Displacement did not make people equal. On the contrary, it emphasized the differences even more. Looking at my displaced fellow townsman when meet I them now, I see more clearly than I did in Kerynia how much one differs from another. The eternal complainer has become more of a whiner. He who did not have any firm ideals within him now shows his emptiness even more. The lover of money has become even more insatiable. A good heart is even warmer now in the refugee tent than in the mansion in Kerynia. Displacement has not made people equal. Displacement has revealed the true dimensions of our souls.

30 December 1974

The next to the last day of the year. Usually at this time I would evaluate the year past. What should I do this year, I wonder? Should I measure my pain? The pain of one who has had everything taken away cannot be measured. Should I make plans for the future? I made so many in previous years. I saw many of them realized after toil and struggle: studies, drawings, paintings, housework, embroiadries. All lost! All that remains is the hope of a return to our birthplace, to our looted homes, to start from the beginning. That, of course, is not in my hands. However, I will preserve the hope, even if it is curtailed.

I sit in the heavy shadow of this pain and I bid farewell to the year that is ending. I sit in its heavy shadow and greet the New Year which finds me in displacement. Within me, what was steadfast has remained. What I was I continue to be. And what I love ‘is born incessantly’ and what I love ‘is always beginning’.

31 December 1974

I may not write here again this Christmas. I have to tidy up a little, shop for a few trifles for my daughter. At the evening we are going to Sophronia’s sister. I will not stay at home tomorrow. I will not light a fire in the hearth, like last year, in order to burn olive leaves and recite ‘Saint Basil, reveal whether so-and-so loves me...’

My daughter is expecting Santa Clauis to bring her presents. What should I expect? Nothing! If only I were able to give, to give a little courage to Sophronia, a smile to my daughter, warmth to mother and to my other refugee relatives and friends.

Today I sat and finished the first embroidery of my exile. Perhaps it is foolish that I sit and persevere. He that as it may, I embroidered my monogram on it and the date, as can be seen on old Cypriot embroidery. I hope that this one, at least, will be inherited by my children and not disappear in a new wave of misfortunes.

I had better finish here, though. I have work to do.

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22 From the poem Sun the First by Odysseas Elytis.
A new month and I am being buried and trying to rise to the surface to breathe under the dull sky of Luxembourg.

Yesterday was one of the worst days of my life. It can be compared with the pain and heartache of the Turkish invasion. The Turkish Cypriot who works permanently in the Turkish Embassy of Brussels was here. They had sent him on purpose! He is inviting all the Members of Parliament to visit our land occupied by the Turkish army free of charge. He is promising them the moon and the stars. Unfortunately, Turkish propaganda affords to spend thousands of pounds for this purpose.

Dressed smartly, with a red handkerchief in the pocket of his jacket. Arrogant, talking triumphantly, he alleged, when I confronted him, that after 1974, the Turkish Cypriots were at last able to exist and it was time for us (the Greek Cypriots) to suffer. I wondered when was it that our people did not suffer? During the three hundred miserable years of the Ottoman yoke or later, when the Turks sold us to the English like sheep? Or, perhaps, when the Turks forcibly drove us from our homes and are still not allowing us to return to them after all these years?

He referred to my book Refugee in my Homeland, which is being used distorted by Turkish propaganda lately, and this, because I committed the sin of claiming the rights of the people of Kerynia publicly, as their representative.23

23 The author of this book was elected by the displaced people of the Kerynia District as their representative in the Parliament of Cyprus. She served as an MP for fifteen years, from 1981 to 1996.
It was evident that nothing else interests him but the expansion of Turkey over the whole of Cyprus. Nor is he concerned about the survival of the Turkish Cypriots. He does not admit that they, too, suffer from restrictions and the presence of the Turkish army and the settlers that Turkey is bringing, on purpose, from different parts of Asia Minor. This is the reason why he is an employee of the Turkish Embassy in Brussels, anyway.

Once again, I realised that real events can be presented in such a way as to become unrecognisable, according to the interests of any unscrupulous distorer.

Prosogia, 20 July 1984

Ten years since the onset of the Turkish invasion; twelve noon. The church bell of our neighbourhood tolled mournfully. I am home alone with my mother. She suffers the memories of the tragic events in silence, while doing the small household chores: she peels the black-eyed beans, she washes the dishes, she takes the ice cubes out of their tray and places them in a plastic bag in the freezer so that they would be handy when needed....

I.... ? Which I? Ten years after the invasion I have built my home half a mile from the Turkish outposts of the Attila Line. Here, in the western outskirts of divided Lefkosa, not knowing when Attila will strike again, when he will tear my humble nest to pieces yet again. Not knowing when he will decide to destroy, for a second time, the few remnants of Kerynia that I have gathered together during these ten years. Not knowing whether this time he won't manage to tear me also to pieces physically, to kill me....

Prosogia, 1 October 1984

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
35th Session, Second Part
Strasbourg, France

Today the Turks circulated in the Assembly a misleading pamphlet, which does not only distort the history of Cyprus, but uses, once again,
This is an absolutely unacceptable misinterpretation of the meaning both of the phrases quoted and of my book in general. In these sixty-six pages the book laments the suffering of the people of Cyprus during the period of the coup in 1974 (which lasted eight days) and during the violent Turkish invasion and occupation that followed it by way of pretext (which has now lasted more than ten years).

Particularly, my book is a chronicle of the suffering of those of us in Cyprus who were forcibly driven from our homes by the Turkish occupation troops and are being prevented from returning to them ever since. So we are forced to be "refugees in our own homeland".

Referring to the propagandist pamphlet, I cannot avoid referring to other serious inaccuracies contained in it, in its attempt to justify the unjustifiable: an occupation, which has now continued for so many years, of part of Cyprus and the denial of the fundamental rights contained in the European Charter of Human Rights to its people and, particularly, to the refugees.

Rina Catselli
Substitute to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Cyprus

1 October 1984

Rina Catselli (or Katselli) was born in Kerynia, in 1938, and lived there till the Turkish invasion of July 1974, when she was forced to flee along with the rest of the Greek Cypriots of Kerynia. Her books, which include novels, theatrical plays and historical accounts, are for the most part centred on Kerynia and her people. She was an MP for fifteen years representing the refugees of Kerynia District.

David Bailey was born in England, in 1947. He studied Art and Design in Liverpool College of Art. In 1972 he came in Cyprus and worked in the Cyprus Broadcasting. Now he lives in France.

Erricos Neophytou, B.A. PSM JP, was born in Nicosia in 1940. His family moved to Kerynia in 1942 where he lived until July 1974, when he was uprooted by the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. In 1978 he immigrated to Adelaide, South Australia, where he studied for a B.A. in Interpreting and Translating at the University of Adelaide. He is the manager of the South Australian Government Interpreting and Translating Services, the Interpreting and Translating Centre. In January 2001 the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia awarded him with the Public Service Medal (PSM) for outstanding public service and innovation in the field of interpreting and translating services in South Australia.

Maria Parani, M.A. D.Phil., is a refugee from the town of Morphou. She was four years old at the time of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. She studied Archaeology and History of Art at Athens, London and Oxford. She specialises in Byzantine art and archaeology.

Despina Catselli is a refugee from Kerynia. She was four years old in 1974. She left Cyprus in 1988. She now lives and works in the U.K. in the film and television industry.

Stavroula Catselli was an embryo when her mother was forced by the Turkish troops to leave Kerynia in July 1974. She was born in Limassol in 1975. She studied Graphic Design at Coventry University, U.K., and Interactive Telecommunications at New York University. She now lives and works in England.

George Sfongaras was born in Kerynia in 1937. He is a refugee since 1974 and lives in Nicosia. He was a cameraman in the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation for 34 years. He has an abiding interest in artistic photography and has often exhibited his work in Cyprus.
30th December 1974

The next to the last day of the year. Usually at this time I would evaluate the year past. What should I do this year, I wonder? Should I measure my pain? The pain of one who has had everything taken away cannot be measured. Should I make plans for the future? I made so many in previous years. I saw many of them realized after toil and struggle: studies, drawings, paintings, housework, embroideries. All lost! All that remains is the hope of a return to our birthplace, to our looted homes, to start from the beginning.