

product of cultural factors. To find the answer, therefore, we must examine the physical, social and cultural environment, the way people conduct their everyday life, the way they relate to one another, the food they eat and in general their manner of cultural adaptation within the ecological habitat.

Beaubier, through field work, attempts to delineate those characteristics of the Parians that are assumed to be correlated with a long life. He shows that the Parians practice preventive medicine, without, of course, recognizing it as such, and that their life is patterned along certain principles on the good life laid down by their ancestors thousands of years back. The ancients, also, we are informed, lived unusually long lives.

An examination of the dietary habits of the people shows that they eat a large variety of fresh fruits and vegetables including wild plants. They also supplement their diet with "nutritious mushrooms, legumes, nuts, pods and seeds, leafy greens, roots, shoots and bulbs, fruits and berries, spices and condiments". They mistrust and dislike canned foods and conserved meats like salami and sausages and prefer to eat fresh fish and lamb, once a week. Pork is considered unhealthy. Consumption of olive oil is high both for cooking, in salads and for medicinal purposes, as a laxative. Yogurt also is part of their diet.

Parians spend much of their time outdoors and get plenty of exercise through fishing and farming. They are scrupulously clean and live in a pollution-free environment.

The author also identifies certain normative characteristics that are assumed to be related to longevity. He finds, for example, that on Paros the ideal is to be gentle, soft spoken, courteous, cooperative and community minded. These he notes promote strong patterns of cooperation and thus low levels of stress, an important element for longevity. Consequently Parian society is free of suicide, homicides, drug addiction, mental illness and all the other maladies so common in modern urban societies.

Certain values related to family life are also viewed by the author as basic to longevity. The Parians show special affection and care to the two most vulnerable groups in society, children and the aged. Thus, Parians have a very high self-esteem, they are proud of their long history and conduct their everyday life with zest and vitality.

In spite of the importance of the topic and the massive statistical information given about Paros, this book suffers considerably from poor organization and editorial carelessness. It seems that there was hardly any basic revision of the original Ph.D. dissertation from which this study was extracted. For example, although the text is only 136 pages long, 49 of them are tables. The author could have offered a much richer exposition of the everyday life of the people of Paros than he did (which was very sketchy) and the tables could have been summarized in an appendix. As it stands the study will probably be useful to government officials in Greece that deal with Paros but it is certainly not bedtime reading for somebody interested in the secrets of longevity or about Paros for that matter.

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Pandélis Prévelakis, *Crète Infortunée: Chronique du Soulèvement Crétois de 1866-1869*, traduit du néo-grec par Pierre Coavoux, Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1976, pp. 262+ map.

Pandelis Prevelakis, *The Tale of a Town*, translated from modern Greek by Kenneth Johnstone, London-Athens, Doric Publications, 1976.

Few perhaps are the countries on earth so abundantly endowed with a restless history

for so many centuries as Greece has been, whose battle for survival and for freedom has had so many and such painful turns. Dire necessity has marvelously kept the notion of active heroism powerfully undiminished there, even in times when the cult of anti-heroism has joined several other sceptical negations. There has hardly been a modern Greek generation that did not have to pay, at least once, its blood-price of life, the human right to live free in a free land.

The tragedy of Cyprus these days, where two hundred thousand Greek Cypriots have been unjustly, violently, savagely driven out of their soil and their age-old ancestral homes, and have been deprived of the peaceful works of their age-old toil, all under the passive but not innocent, the forbearing if not approving eyes of the great civilized nations, has had several precedents in Greek history.

Les Belles Lettres publishers in France have recently brought out Pierre Coavoux's French translation of Pandelis Prevelakis' *Pandermi Kriti* (Desolate or Unfortunate Crete), and the publication has given the author the opportunity to point out, in his Preface to the translation, the striking similarity between the present situation in Cyprus and the situation less than a hundred years ago in Crete.

I put "Desolate Cyprus" as the title of this text of mine accompanying the French translation of my *Desolate Crete* because the sufferings of the two isles present striking analogies. In both cases the conquering and the conquered peoples belong to two races which have fought for centuries against each other in the same arena. Their fight should certainly have come to an end—and they have given proof of it in a short period of time after 1923—if certain of the Great Powers did not push them with their intrigues into an inextricable tangle of antagonisms and recriminations. Crete and Cyprus have apparently been the apple of discord between Greece and Turkey but the real pretenders to the domination of these large Greek isles situated between three continents have been more than two.

In that same Preface, Prevelakis quotes a letter sent in 1866 by the Greek poet Alexandros Rizos Rangavis to his illustrious French colleague Victor Hugo, an exile at Guernsey at that time, to appeal to his genius in the name of humanity and the freedom of civilization, and to ask him to intervene with his inspired word and speak out for the sake of the martyrs dying in Crete for their faith and freedom. Highly touching and powerful was the response of Victor Hugo who, in a piece he published at Trieste in the following year, after giving an account of the tragic and heroic events in Crete, indignantly raised the question as to what the so-called civilized governments were doing besides endlessly deliberating and negotiating at the expense of thousands of lives. Prevelakis wishes this French publication of his book to be another such appeal to his fellow-writers all over the world for the sake of the suffering Cypriots.

I have confidence in the poets. They have sufficient imagination so as to put themselves in the place of the human beings deprived of their national freedom. They do certainly have pity of them. They will think of the dead, of the wounded, of the hostages, of the raped women, of the children and the orphans. They will deplore the peaceful activities so interrupted, the monuments destroyed and the churches profaned.

Pandermi Kriti (Desolate Crete) was first published in 1945 in a sumptuous, wonderfully printed, large-size volume with wood-cut illustrations by Kefalinos. It was soon followed by *O Kritikos* (The Cretan) by the same author, a trilogy, a three volume real-imaginative chronicle bearing the individual titles *To Dhéntro* (The Tree, 1948), *I Próti Lefteriá* (The First Freedom, 1949) and *I Politla* (The State or the Republic, 1950) (which also appeared in French in 1957 and received high praise from two members of the French Academy). Both these works had a highly appealing, picturesque precedent in their author's *To Chronikó miás*

Polittas (The Chronicle or Tale of a Town) of 1936, a work of surpassing poetic texture in the wonderfully drawn portrait of the author's native Rethymno and the ritualistic harmony, balance and beauty of life in the early part of this century, before two world wars and modernity brought destruction upon it through corruption, estrangement and alienation. That Chronicle was an immediate success, and has known great popularity in its several editions and translations including the recent one in English.

It was the first prose canvas drawn by its creator of his Cretan world in its peaceful activities, a world blessed by the happiness and pride of its people in their industry and skill, their honesty and dedication as professionals, craftsmen, artisans, laborers, men and women, their faith in God, their various roles in the beehive of their society. It all ended sadly in the decline of that society when extraneous elements split it apart.

In 1941 Greece knew a short but great day of glory with her heroic and briefly victorious resistance to the Fascist invaders on the Albanian front. She was soon to succumb forcefully to Hitler's crushing attack that led her into three awful years of Nazi occupation. In those years of terror, torture, inhumanity, deprivation, starvation, stagnation and uncertainty, the stand of the Greek intellect ranged from secret active resistance to passive submission, encompassing a variety of efforts of that intellect to face and to creatively mitigate or even transcend the abominable circumstances. Apart from the clandestine literature of resistance, there were the imaginative, often nostalgic escapes into happier times and worlds, the worlds of love, of childhood, of adolescence, of heroic legend, adventure or even metaphysics, all in search of alleviation and solace in the present sufferings. There were also the summonings of historical and heroic memories, close or remote, to provide comforting and encouraging parallels of endurance and faith in the hope of an eventual liberation. It is to this last category that the two war-chronicles of Prevelakis positively belong as invocations of the heroic element in the Greek soul in its love for freedom. It is early to guess that the superhuman resistance of his fellow-Cretans to the Nazi parachutists in 1941 gave his creativity the initial, great and decisive spark, and set his mind researching to recapture and recreate Crete's long battle for freedom.

Widely known to the world is the war of Independence that Greece fought in the second decade of the last century to end her four centuries of slavery under the Turk, but less known is the far longer and often braver battle that Crete fought for her own freedom. Under the rule of Venice from 1204 to 1669, that island passed then under her new dynast, the Turk, more than two centuries later than most of the rest of Greece did. Her several uprisings against her oppressor date from as early as 1770 to reoccur at long or shorter intervals, almost regularly, for almost another century and a half. When the Greek mainland declared her war of Independence in 1821, unarmed Crete joined her bravely in that battle, hoping that the time had come for her too to overthrow her bloody despot. But that wasn't the wish of the Sultan or of the obscure, opportunistic and selfish diplomacy of the Great Powers. Greece was recognized as a free nation in 1829 but Crete was condemned to continue suffering brutality, bloodshed and genocide until 1912, and her long battle reduced her population by half. Talking of that battle in a memorial speech he gave in 1966, on the centenary of the Uprise of 1866, Prevelakis remarked:

Two hundred years after the total conquest of Crete by the Turk, our fathers decided for the Great uprise of 1866. That was neither the first nor the last one! Such uprisings exploded in Crete with the periodic frequency of the natural phenomena. You would say that the Cretan waited for the sping of every year to take the arms. But the uprise of 1866 History has called "great" because in the three years that it lasted the sacrifices it exacted in human lives and goods were really enormous. Two hundred years of Turkish slavery

were enough to morally exhaust a nation, especially when these years followed the four centuries of slavery under the Venetians. As Homer once said, "in slavery, half of the soul of man perishes". But the Free Besieged of Crete, because they held their soul unslaved, they gave the lie to the father of poets. They turned their Slavery into a school of revolt. The titanic men and the martyred women of the island resulted into the steep conclusion that human life finds its value only in freedom. "Freedom or Death" was written on their standards... In 1830 the London Conference recognized the independence of the Greek State, which, however, did not include Crete in its borders. The "Beautiful isle lying in the middle of the sea", according to Dante, was desired by the Mighty Ones of the earth as a key point of their sea sovereignty. They found it more advantageous to leave the island to the Turk, each hoping to eventually grab her for his own account. How could they not imagine, the fools, that before the lapse of a century and a half their own Empires were to be liquidated!

The Cretans, however, took to the arms in 1821 and fought the Hagarene on the island as well as on the Greek mainland for the seven years that that national uprising lasted. At the end of that Holy War Crete was condemned to stay in slavery, but a people respecting itself cannot bear to live outside history. A proud people rises against injustice. A fighting people does not allow itself to be buried alive. From 1830 on Crete never ceased to prepare for her new Great Uprising.

That Uprising lasted from 1866 to 1869 with tremendous losses. It reached its peak of heroism and tragicality in the episode of Arkádhi, where three hundred fighting Cretans, with monks among them, and more than six hundred non-combatants, women and children, in the homonymous walled monastery resisted an army of twenty eight thousand Turks. When the Turkish cannons smashed down the main gate, the brave defenders set fire to their gunpowder magazine and the explosion killed most of them as well as three thousand of the assailants.

The Arkádhi holocaust is the core and climax of *Desolate Crete*, making also part of *The Cretan* trilogy, the larger, and more panoramic account of the critical years of Crete's fighting. *The Cretan* differs also from the *Desolate Crete* in that it mixes in its epic texture the accuracy of the historical facts and figures with imaginary ones without, however, deviating from the spirit of its historical faithfulness. A parallel of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, it is a grandiose canvas with Crete as its central and main figure, her physical and cultural world, her people, their heroic spirit, their private and communal life, their common cause being the love of freedom, a world recalling in several respects the heroic world of Homer's epics. Factually, in its three parts this prose epos traces the three progressive stages from the long years of fighting to the gaining of freedom and finally to the building of a newborn free State wherein the solving of major ideological and other problems and conflicts was involved.

Let it be added that the Arkádhi episode was still to wait for its final, fullest and most solemn expression in a dramatic form, the play *Iphéstio* (Volcano) of 1962. What happened at Arkádhi in 1866 gave it the aura of a sanctum for a holy pilgrimage for the whole nation, and more particularly for Prevelakis himself, whose young uncle was slaughtered there as a martyr by the Turks in the Refectory of the monastery. It has been for him his most sacred tie with his land. Prefacing his play he stated:

I started writing *The Cretan* in August 1942, after I had tried to specify my Greekness and to delineate my duty as a writer in a text I called "Epitaphios". Even before I had finished the first volume of *The Cretan*, the Cretan uprising of 1866 had inflamed so much my imagination, that I started writing the *Desolate Crete* (Pandermi Kriti). Arkádhi rose before my eyes and I was seized with awe. I hurried by with much shivering and continued recounting the Fight at land and sea. So I finished the chronicle of the Uprising and then I had

still to wait for long. The testimonies of those who survived the Holocaust, as collected by the late Timotheos Veneris, Metropolitan of Crete, gave at last to my imagination the redeeming shake.

How sad, one might say, that much of man's greatest literature has been inspired by and has dealt with war. Yet if war is of the substance of life, there are fortunately wars and wars, there are the right and the wrong causes for it, and there is certainly no war more righteous, more sacred than the one fought in defence of freedom, of human rights, of human dignity when those are seriously offended or trampled down. And what indeed could have been a more heartening message of endurance and of promise for the nation suffering again in those dark days of the Occupation than the heroism accomplished at Arkádhí, the supreme event that was the beginning of the end of Crete's dark days under the Turk?

These two heroic chronicles of Prevelakis could not possibly have been published when the Nazis were still there. They had to wait for the liberation. It is remarkable that the French publication of *Desolate Crete* could not be more timely, with that work destined to gain a new relevance to the current reality as it comes to address and to wake the conscience of the free-minded and righteous people of the world, to draw their attention to the terrible blow brought upon the laws of human justice and human rights in Cyprus. It was only too soon forgotten that less than forty years ago, when one after another the great European nations yielded under the advance of the Wehrmacht, the Greek people, poorly armed as they were, fought to the last for the cause of liberty. Their brave resistance, so enthusiastically recognized and praised in those days, slowed the advance of the Axis, lending the western democratic allies time, no matter how little, and inspiration for the reversal of the progress of things for the final victory.

No praise could exaggerate the literary virtues of Prevelakis as the author of his three chronicles, *The Tale of a Town*, *Desolate Crete* and *The Cretan*, each one a different version of the chronicle as a genre, and his qualifications for the task he undertook. Blessed are the nations whose historical or other greatness is storied by a bard of Prevelakis's calibre. Born in Rethymno in 1909 to a family of distinguished heroic and intellectual tradition and accomplishment, he grew up in the atmosphere of the final developments of Crete's long battle. He personally knew some of its fighters and personalities, and listened to their voices and their accounts. It was a time when some of the vestiges of a long tradition and its heroic spirit were still alive. Prevelakis was later to become the younger and closest life-long friend and spiritual companion of his fellow-countryman Nikos Kazantzakis. He early felt that it was his supreme duty and hard privilege to devote most of his richly endowed genius to giving a creative testimony of his native land, its life and history, its cultural significance and human values, its virtues as well as vices in poems, chronicles, novels and plays, besides teaching the history of art at the Higher School of Fine Arts in Athens. And rather than yielding to the Western or Oriental intellectual and ideological temptations to which he amply exposed himself in his formative years, temptations which led his older friend into his often self-alienating spiritual adventure, he decided to resist them so as not to become another "outsider", and to stay faithful, as much as his modern awareness allowed him, to the positive and eternal humane values of his Cretan origin. He painfully made out of those values and his tradition a ground on which to stand and face the world with understanding, and try to give answers to the major questions plaguing modern man.

In the Preface to his translation of *Desolate Crete* Pierre Coavoux remarks that "the main personages in it are Crete, the Cretans and the Turks. The facts are real, historical, verifiable to their utmost detail, and in their chronological order. But this chronicle is more than a chronicle. The author avoids both the coldness of the historian and the imagination of the novelist,

the emotion of the artist, however, joins that of the Cretan, and the narrator, like a popular bard, takes his time so as not to omit citing such and such exploit or valor, yet without passing judgment upon it. He humbly effaces himself like the painter of a sacred icon. He remains concise and unspectacular, with a language close to the essential, yet profiting from all the resources of the Greek language and of the Cretan dialect. The comparisons, metaphors, verbal devices have the simplicity, roughness and weight of a language rooted in the real. The figure of a hero is drawn in just a few lines giving the shadows and the violent lights of certain Byzantine paintings, and that is the beauty and the difficulty of Prevelakis' art".

Very few indeed are the living Greek authors, especially among the younger ones, who have Prevelakis's mastery of the Greek language as its perfect stylist, a language which, as he himself stated in his book on Kazantzakis:

does indeed excite and charm the imagination with its descriptive power. Words speak with images, thought is translated at once into pictures. Even abstract concepts end as an image, the word links the intelligible with the sensible.

With no trace of mannerism or preciosity, Prevelakis transfers to his reader the supreme pleasure he takes in calling things with their inimitable true name, the "mot juste". His deeper attachment to his language as the choice blossom of his land and the true quintessence of its spirit, with the smell of earth in it, is an attachment he deeply shared with Kazantzakis and Sikelianos, his older friends. From that attachment he has drawn the power to fight against the serious danger of becoming an "outsider", as most moderns have fatally become. With no parochialism and no provincialism whatever, he let his creed be tested and strengthened in the alienating alembic of his times, so that his aesthetic and ideological message exhumes a power of mental and moral sanity of a universal value. The divisions of modernity have forced man to turn within wherein individual conscience, substituting society, was to build a possible harmony out of the challenging doubts and conflicts, and this has been very much Prevelakis's own effort. As against the decline of values he has posited human dignity, the respect for the human soul in its noble endeavours as strengthened by its ties with a valuable inheritance, physical and cultural, and by heroism in its fight against injustice, violence or corrupt and selfish politicking. The supreme gift of life is freedom, certainly a difficult commodity that more often than not expects its high price.

The task Mr. Coavoux undertook in translating Prevelakis was a hard one and one does certainly admire the result and the extent of its proximity to the original. Texts deeply committed to the peculiar virtues of a language are the hardest to translate. Style is hard to transplant from one language to another. Where the word reigns supreme over the idea it carries (as this is true of most of great poetry), there are no exact equivalents between languages. There are only approximations and there are major sacrifices involved. As Mr. Coavoux confesses, he was highly aware of them, and of that awareness the multilingual reader becomes conscious. With all facts considered, Mr. Coavoux did remarkably well, and one hopes that his translation will carry Prevelakis's message to the poets of the world, who know better than most people that what was once the right human cause for Crete is now the right human cause for Cyprus. And may they carry that message further and further to the ears and conscience of those who should know and on whose decisions human justice depends.

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