

An Extract from my period in Cyprus (1972-1974)

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"How can I help you?"

"I am sorry to barge in a like this but nothing ventured..."

"Yes indeed".

"I'm going to be staying in Nicosia for some time and I wondered if you happened to know anyone with a house to let?"

The soldier behind the desk scratched his head with a pencil.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm going to be teaching".

"English?"

"Yes".

"And you're looking for a house?"

"That's right. I've been staying in hotels and guesthouses but, I need to find somewhere a bit more permanent".

"Well, as a matter of fact I might be able to help you. There's two fellows here, one of them is a priest and they're just about to leave. Friends of my wife."

He rummaged about his desk and picked something out. "Got it! 19 Prousis Street. Its right in the center of town near the archepiscopi, you know where Makarios has his bunker. Big place can't miss it! Got about a thousand rooms and steel gates with flowers. You want to speak to Mike Riddle, Reverend Mike Riddle and Father Dominic Ceere."

Prousis Street was a narrow, dusty road bordered on either side by a variety of dwellings. Some had small verandas with potted plants. Doors hung open in the sweltering heat. The walls of the houses were mostly painted white. Each had shutters, white or cream. At the end of the street was a small shop selling fruit, vegetables and cigarettes. No. 19 was adjacent to the shop. An old lady sat knitting linen opposite the entrance to the house. She watched me wordlessly as I knocked on the door. I heard footsteps inside.

"Reverend Riddle?"

"I was talking to Tommy Sheridan just Now..."

"come in, come in..."

The house was absolutely devoid of furniture of any sort. A suitcase was parked in the hallway where we stood. He led me into the lounge, basically a large shuttered room whose shutters he opened. I told him of my plight, my hope and he smiled.

"Well, this is it. Want to have a look around? You are very lucky. We are leaving tomorrow. The owners have the shop next door. They're good people and they can help you if you decide to take the place."

He quickly showed me around and took me next door to the shop. Only the son spoke English and by good fortune was on his lunch-hour from school. He translated, told me the price which was very reasonable and the deal was done. I would move in tomorrow. I left them all well satisfied convinced of God's guidance and help from invisible sources. So here was after 10 days in Cyprus opening my first center. 19 Prousis Street. The house, I was later to discover, was called by the locals "The helicopter house". It was from There in March 1970 President Makarios's helicopter was shot down, with him narrowly escaping. Polycarpos Yorgadjis, the former Minister of the Interior, was said by the Archbishop to be implicated, only to be murdered a week later in mysterious circumstances. When I first asked Demetrios, the son of the owner about the holes now patched over on the roof he told me that 18 months ago there had been a gun battle when the police had fought with two EOKA terrorists who had climbed up, mounted a machine-gun and fired on Makarilos' helicopter as it came into land. The pilot had been wounded but managed to land the helicopter. The police had rushed round to the house and succeeded eventually in killing the two men on the roof. His face lit up as he told me the story struggling just to find the words for "machine-gun". He made a noise instead and I volunteered the words. As if to comfort me he added: "blood all cleared up". So there was no blood dripping into my bedroom at the back of the house. "Good" I said, poly kala "eager to impress him with my Greek. About six words so far. He smiled indulgently.

I bought cheap seats, a blackboard and a simple camp bed. The very small amount of money which I'd brought, was running out. Once I had paid one month's rent in advance, it was almost gone. Surely, something would turn up. Neighbours had watched as I had carried the furniture into the house waving and smiling. One evening about 6 o'clock there was a knock on the door and Demetrius and a man that I had never seen before were standing there.

"Thees ees o kyrios Papadopoulos. Ee want to know if you teach his son and good English?"

Demetrius translated. "My son is so stupid he needs help with all his school work. Socrates is eleven but very very stupid with English. He is not a bad boy. He plays football for his school."

The man looked at me in some distress. I asked him "when would Socrates come?". He told me that he could come immediately. I looked at Demetrius who obviously thought this was quite normal, wondered how much he would pay me and how can I ask when he said: "how much you charge?"

I asked Demetrius what he thought was reasonable and he told me a figure. I suggested the figure to the man and he agreed. Five minutes later Socrates was sitting in my front room, black hair, brown skin, white trousers and flashing eyes. It was very obvious that he did not want be here.

As any foreign language teacher will tell you, the most difficult task is starting from the very beginning. I quickly discovered that Socrates could speak no English apart from happy birthday which he said as: "happee burdee". I started with the world shattering news, pointing dramatically: "this is a table". As I pointed to him to repeat the phrase Demetrius said "happee burdee".

I persevered over many weeks leading him on to giddy heights of expression. "The door is open. The door is closed. Open the door. Close the door. This is my nose. This is my face. These are my fingers. "Demetrius in turn taught me Greeks swear words so at least I could recognise what some people might be saying some of the time. I needed help. I bought a book., Getting confused one-day in a fruit shop between archiosmos (the ancient form of Greek) and demodikos (contemporary Greek) I asked the shopkeeper: "canst thou give unto me yonder red gleaming aphrodisiacs". (also apples in the ancient Greek) The stall holder was so delighted at this distraction to his otherwise mundane day, that he

immediately invited other stall holders and asked me to repeat what I just said. They burst out laughing, slapping their thighs and to each other on the backs asking me to repeated endlessly. Eventually he give me six apples and said to me in very good English: "I haven't had such a good laugh since I from came back from London". He had lived in Camden for six years which accounted for his cockney accent.

I put an advert in a newspaper advertising English lessons and received several pupils. One of them suggested we barter his teaching me Greek from my teaching him English, or at least better English since he already spoke some. We tried this for some time until he invited me for dinner with his Russian wife.

"How did you meet each other?"

George (that was his name) said: "I spent a year in Moscow studying."

"did you win a scholarship?"

"yes. The Soviets have been very generous here in Cyprus. Many students have gone to Moscow".

"have they? Why have they been so generous?"

"they want to bring peace here on this island."

"How Ave they going to do that?"

"they want to teach us Equality between Greek and Turk".

I should have left it at that. But at that point his wife joined in speaking excellent English. She was a good cook too and we had eaten well. But this time we were sitting outside drinking coffee in his small garden in one of the suburbs of Nicosia. His house was small but tastefully decorated. They had no children and I could feel he was an ambitious man. During our lessons he had been quite insistent on learning business phrases. I was not surprised to learn that he had started an export company. His wife said to me:

"do you know anything about the Soviet lifestyle?"

"you have a centralised economy".

"yes. This works very well. We also have a rich culture, many languages, many people, races but one thought. We are like one family you see. If one is hungry then the other gives food. If one is poor then food is given. Education is free. All people the same. Ignorance is our enemy."

"but you have no religion."

"this stopped progress. Religion is like a drug." She said. "Make you sleep. Not to see reality of exploitation".

"And if people do not agree with you put them in labour camps".

"This is bourgeois propaganda. No labour camps. Just lies."

"churches are closed down and people are thrown into prison".

She laughed gently, indulgently, turned to her husband's and spoke to him in Greek. He also laughed and I felt the first prickles of irritation. It began to occur to me to question why a so many young Cypriot students were in Moscow. Did many of them come back with Soviet wives? I realised that I'd better read and understand more about the political reality of the small islands. One thing which I had noticed to my amazement on news stands were the existence of up to 10 different newspapers. Each represented a distinctive political voice, or so I had been told. Cyprus had been since 1876 a colony of Britain which was not really occupied until 1914. Despite its independence in 1960 Britain still maintains an air base in Akrotiri and the United Nations troops patrolled the dividing line between the Greek and Turkish communities in Nicosia.

And dinner ended shortly after that. I told George Moustakis that I would walk home. I saw him only one more time after that in the library of the British Council where he nodded in a slightly embarrassed way.

A young Greek conscript turned up at my door after an afternoon's witnessing. I'd been walking down Onassagoris street, Nicosia 's main thoroughfare when I saw him looking into the shop windows. I asked him if he spoke any English and he nodded his head. I had introduced myself and told him I represented an organisation that had just started working in Cyprus to spread a new message. We were giving lectures in our house. Would he like to come. I gave him the address and he said he would come in the evening.

Michaelis was true to his word. He listened keenly to my simplified lecture and came back three more times. I had noticed how intently he watched me and imagined some quiet apostle was whispering in his ear. I noted too how carefully he combed his hair just before entering. I had seen him from the front window with a small mirror in his hand. He often lowered his voice to a whisper when he spoke to me.

One evening after a lecture about restoration he asked me:

"George, what you think when you see me?"

Having just spoken about Abraham my mind was highly tuned to symbols and images. Of course, I saw him as representing generations of people.

"Michaelis, you may be one of the first, a pioneer beckoning a greater host."

He seemed pleased with this, stumbling only over "beckoning". I tried to explain "summoning, calling".

"do you feel we are becoming closer?"

"of course".

"and, you like me?"

"I find it very exciting to be with you".

He flushed with pleasure at this innocent yet sincere compliment. I could see he wanted to say something very important. Perhaps my lectures had gone deeper than even I mentioned. Was he going to be my first spiritual child?

"George," he paused trembling, "I theenk I love you."

My first reaction was to imagine this moment in all its cultural nuances. A demonstrative people, passionate and Mediterranean building marble columns in celebration of a universe peopled by Gods in golden chariots sweeping over the heavens in deep blue skies. In saying "I love you" what this really meant poor Greek man was "I feel God's love for you" "we share God's love" "we are brothers in Christ". My lecture on the mission of Jesus had surely borne fruit! My mind raced ahead. Would he move into the center? Could his Army commitments allow this? He was speaking again.

"I have been thinking about you every night. This love is so deep. I think I have not felt this way before".

"but that's fantastic Michael. So, you except everything I have been teaching?"

Here there was a pause as he translated this in his mind's. He looked bewildered as if we had changed the subject incomprehensibly. "Oh! Yes. You have such a lovely voice and a love your hair and your face."

At this point, as he launched into a panegyric over me, the first suspicions crept up my spine. He continued: "I Want To Hold Your Hand, to kiss your lips and..."

"Just a minute Michael. Let's be clear about what love really means. Remember polarity?" But by this time he was in tears.

#I firmly declined Michael's offer of "friendship" drawing two overlapping circles on the black board and labelled them male and female. Looking into his dewy eyes I reiterated the conviction that the universe was fundamentally polarised as a reflection of the dual nature of the creator. "Mrs. God!" I said, banging a small piece of white chalk on the board surface. "Mrs. God and Mr. God!" The distant marching of Spartan armies muscular and ambiguous filled the air as. Michael found his coat and left sadly. I crossed him of my prayer list unwilling to burden myself with something I did not really understand. Greek Cypriot men frequently walked hand in hand as innocently as schoolchildren on the way to the dining room or the playgrounds.

I could see that my few individual pupils would not be enough income. I bought an English newspaper on a street corner read it in a cafe. Turning to the adverts I read that an English teacher was wanted at the Hadjianastiou institute in the southern part of Nicosia. I decided not to waste time writing but just to turn up at Institute. It took me only 20 minutes to find Archimedes Avenue. The Institute was situated on a large forecourt were several cars were parked. And from the outside it looked like he could contain a fifteen or twenty classrooms. I went to the reception were very young secretary listened to my story before informing me that she did not understand what I was saying and went to find someone. When she returned it was with a man in a grey suit and with silver hair. I quickly realise that he was the headmaster. He took me into his office and began to interview me there and then. He seemed quickly satisfied that I

was qualified to teach and to ask me when I could start. I told him as soon as possible and he said "tomorrow?". I agreed. Before I left his office he moved into headmaster mode:

"This is a good school. We have Greek and Turkish children here. Discipline is no problem. The academic standard is excellent and we have a very good reputation. Of course we move through the range of abilities, from beginners to more advanced. Children go on from my institute to university in Athens and London. We have two other British teachers here, Mr. Swanson and Mrs. Taylor. I'm sure you'll meet them in the staffroom. See you tomorrow. I will introduce you to the children myself. Your classes will be 14 to 16 year-olds. We used Davison's primary here. Perhaps you know it? There has four different levels."

I realised as I walked out of school that I had not asked him about money. Had I been lucky in just turning up? Had other people come for the interview? Anyway I had the job. The air was cool in the shade as I walked back up Archimedes Avenue. Things were opening out. These people were my mission. The first trenches had been dug for God's temple on Mount Olympus.

Cyprus is an island of 3,572 square miles and is a kind of oblong, shape parallel to the equator. I had not yet toured the island read that it was 141 miles in length and at its widest point 59 miles in breadth. It is an island of mountains—the long narrow to meet this Kyrenia range that overshadows the inland capital of Nicosia runs just below the northern coastline; in the center and west is the Troodos massif, including one of those heights which the Greeks named Olympus. Between these two is a plain, 12 to 15 miles wide, which is very fertile provided the rains arrive—which they sometimes do not. when I first arrived it had not rained for a year. Scenery and climate alike seem to justify the classical reputation of Cyprus as the birthplace of Aphrodite and goddess of love.. The northern shore faces Turkey, from which at the nearest point it is only 43 miles distant; this fact was never forgotten by the Turks. Syria is 64 miles to the east, while the Greek mainland is 500 miles away. The great majority of the population is and has been for more than 3,000 years Greek by language and culture.. The nearness of Syria and many of the other oil-producing nations were shortly to become a strategic issue.

But these geopolitical facts paled into insignificance compared to paying the rent or finding my first spiritual child. Back home in the kitchen I had discovered another reason for the house's cheap rent. I had been slicing a melon with a very large insect decided to join me at the side of the plate. It was a flying cockroach and not one of God's pretties creations. His brothers and sisters quickly appeared to welcome me to their home hoping no doubt, that we could all live together with myself providing the food.

I do not like cockroaches (forgive me Father) and flying variety even less. Having squashed a few and cracked a few hard shells I decided to challenge my limitations. I captured one in an empty glass jar, and made myself gaze into the horror of its sticky legs and mindless brain while repeating positive affirmations about his right to survive (not in my kitchen!) and the beauty that some angel somewhere was guardian to. In the great design of things there must have been some reason for this item. Perhaps several millions of years ago God was working on aerodynamics still uncertain about his masterpiece that had not yet come. Perhaps we might have had wings and flown. Or four instead of two legs and hopped. I sang to my specimen, tried to make him laugh and eventually released him out side in the street. I cannot remember St France's doing better. Swallows and nightingales are easily loved not so cockroaches.

Everyone, including the pupils, knew the headmaster as "Harry". In years gone by it had acquired a well deserved reputation. In some ways the memory of that time still lingered in the corridors. There was the vestiges of a order and purpose. A good curriculum, the school well-maintained externally but something else in the atmosphere which I could not immediately define. It was a kind of nervousness; the feeling of being on some fault line with the ever possible earthquake just round the corner. There was an unspoken ethic as if both the staff, the Secretary and the janitor were saying "let's make the most of it while we can". Was Harry's sick? On his frequent visits to Athens did he visit a clinic? I had heard that he went several times a month.

"am exactimos" they kept on saying.

Was a perhaps some political reason? Had I inadvertently chance upon a school that was really cover for some EOKA supporters? What was it that lay in the basement so heavily padlocked? Was the guns and ammunition, explosives? Some great secret seemed to pervade everyone. It was not until a I raised the question of wages in the staffroom, quite casually pondering when we got paid that the answer came.

"it all depends".

"whether he wins" came the answer.

"wins what?" My mind raced. Wins his life? Was Harry involved in a race against time?

"at gambling".

"gambling?"

"he gambles".

Harry then, was a gambler. He gambled with the school fees apparently. He frequently won and dispersed bonuses to the staff and all was well. When he didn't win, these were the "lean times". Mr. Papandreou's with whom I was talking quickly went on to assure me then he was a good gambler. "Don't worry" he said, "will get by".

Certainly, during the first few months then I taught at the Hadjiastasiou institute I was paid. The following months proved to be lean years when the harvest was uncertain and Harry slipped a few notes into my pocket and said "next month". But by this time I had acquired several more private pupils.

Savas Constantinou knocked on my door one day. He was polite, well-dressed and intelligent. He wanted to speak better English and I taught him not only idiomatic English but the divine principle as well. He listened very thoughtfully and asked many questions. Week after week he would return to my door and scribble diligently in a loose-leaf notebook phrases and sayings in English. We would talk together and then he would say "right, let's get down to the Business". He smiled delighted to have used one of his new sayings. In time he became my friend and in time my first spiritual child. On a weekend trip to Kyrenia, driving through magnificent scenery he told me on a mountain-top cafe that he had been praying about this "new message". God had spoken to him and he believed it was true.

"you see, I am sitting in my car and I'm praying. And suddenly there is a warm feeling and I'm crying and I cannot stop. I feel like a child with his father, new father and very old father, everybody's father. I cry for maybe 10 minutes. The very deep feeling goes away but there feel great peace."

Savas had so many experiences over the next 18 months to which he always shared with me in the same restaurant. He would say: "we must go to eat at Xaeres". When the meal was finally over he whispers "now something to tell you".

There was an English church in Nicosia. day when I was praying a young girl slipped into the back of the Church.. I waited outside for her and when she was finished I introduce myself. Her name was Dorothy Ann Williamson. I invited her for a cup of coffee and she accepted. Over coffee she told me that she was a Christian with an organisation called Operation mobilisation.. She had been travelling over land throughout Europe in a Volkswagen van and had narrowly escaped being raped in Turkey. After praying deeply she told me "the Lord told me to come to Cyprus".

Over the next three weeks I met her many times and gradually taught her the divine principle. She had been on the road for over a year. Wearing a green dress and with light brown hair and a face was deeply tanned by the Sun. She was earnest an intensely seeking God's will. As I won her confidence she told me what had happened to her.

"The van broke down about 20 miles outside off Ankara. I tried to fix it myself but... This man came along the road, got out of his car and offered to help. He didn't really speak very good English but he seemed very confident that he could do it so I let him try. It didn't take very long and I was so pleased I thanked God. But that was when the trouble started. He began to run his hands over my hair and well... Anyway, he forced me back in side and of course I was praying so desperately. He had ripped the top part of my dress and I really thought he would probably kill me. He was just about to... You know.. Suddenly, I felt this great peace and became very calm and I just looked at him like Jesus would look, I mean I suddenly saw him differently. He stopped and said something in Turkish and quickly dressed himself and left. I cried for ages afterwards. Eventually I drove into Ankara. I didn't go to the police but I went instead to the hotel, it was very cheap place that we had agreed upon. There was a telegram from Geoffrey. Something happened to his mother and he was going to be very delayed."

As. She told me this I remember she was watching me very carefully. I felt she had so a much more to say. Operation mobilisation was based in Birmingham. They were Christian evangelical organisation dedicated to sending young people on missions to "spread the word". She had met them two years ago after leaving school. Instead of going to university she had already been on two missions: in Ireland and in Thailand. Geoffrey, her travelling companion was older and even more experienced. He had been a school teacher and given up that profession in London where he had been working.

. She was living in Nicosia with a couple who at one-time had been members of her. church in Canterbury. She did not volunteer this information and I always had to elicit details from her. She would brush the hair from her forehead and around her ears and look very seriously at me always connecting in our mind to some other source before speaking. It was always as if she was awaiting some final confirmation. If I spoke about Jesus she became animated and utterly focused. Other subjects, the political situation, the weather or even what she was wearing left her uninterested, in different and even bored to

be wasting time with minor details of life. She was single-minded to fulfil God's Will. Every day was an adventure with the Lord and she woke up in the morning asking him to guide her footsteps.

I never invited her to my house bearing in mind her experience in Turkey. She did however finally invite me over to have dinner with the family she was staying with. I had given her several pamphlets to read and these Prom I noticed, were prominently displayed on a coffee table in the lounge where we were. To eat. The lady who was our host was immaculately polite over dinner and afterwards began a gentle questioning. This questioning became an interrogation culminating finally about the mission of the Messiah.

"So, if he didn't really come to die why exactly did he come?"

"Well, he really came to lead the nation of Israel. That was why God had been preparing his people for 2000 years".

"but look, the very essence, the heart of Christianity is the great sacrifice made by Christ: "for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son". How can there be any meaning without the crucifixion?"

"that was a secondary course he had to take. Not God primary intention or hope".

"But this is just not right. Christianity is founded upon the blood of the Lamb".

"believe me I love Jesus very much...."

"Well, I have grave doubts about that!"

Ten minutes later I was being firmly ushered out the door with my book in hand and a sinking feeling in my heart. Dorothy had played no part in this pillaging content, it seemed to me to let the hostess dance for the head of John the Baptist. As I left she said nothing, looked mildly defiant and squeezed out a smile of farewell. I'd been convinced that she had been led to Cyprus to meet me. All those sincere prayers, attempted rape and years of devotion swept away into emptiness. I walked home clutching my book in the hot sun of the afternoon.

Cyprus is a land of oranges. Even throughout the busy streets of Nicosia and I saw trees growing with a full crop of oranges just waiting to be picked. Thinking I was truly in Paradise I helped myself. But first I looked around just to make sure there was not too many people watching. Perhaps there were some by-laws about which I was unaware of. I went ahead. Plucked one and quickly peeled it. As I started to eat I understood immediately why a they were so free, suitable only I quickly realised for marmalade and orange juice. I did not realise until then that some oranges could be very bitter indeed.

There was a fruit market only 10 minutes' walk away from my house. I rose early three or four mornings a week to buy melons, cucumbers tomatoes, lettuce and oranges, grapes and olives. From a local grocer I purchased haloumi, goat's cheese that was very delicious on the local bread. I live mostly on fruit and cheese with only occasional treat of a kebab when Harry was winning in Athens. I became friendly with a stall holder market called Nikos. He could speak little English had when I told him I was from Scotland he christened me "Meesteray Scotty" and pretended to give me bargains which I later discovered were still Tourist prices. But there are still cheap and ate well.

One day I took a bus to Paphos and stood at the sea shore where Bible records St Paul's was whipped. I stood next to his statue which had been erected by the Greek Orthodox Church and thought about this man who had come with such enthusiasm to people who wanted rid of him as soon as possible. The stories which he told of the Jewish Messiah, crucified by the Romans and rejected by his own people must have seemed absurd. They had Aphrodite, the goddess of love and to her the sang hymns in praise of a far m more tangible truth. He left with Barnabas and bruises setting sail for others more worthy. In some strange way his spirit came to me as I walked back to the bus revitalised from a worthwhile pilgrimage.

But this time I was teaching in two other schools: Lambaakis and Kykos Academy, the former memorable only for its toilets: a pit three-foot deep used by staff and pupils alike. Kyko was a stoic philosopher who had lived on the island more than 2000 years ago. The headmaster, I later discovered, was a very active supporter of General Grivas. His staff was entirely Greek. The deputy headmaster, Stavros Alexandra interspersed his marking with nocturnal trips into the hills where Grivas men were hiding.

The heat was like some drug that saps your energy. The sun shone continuously like a merciless tyrant from 8 o'clock in the morning until six at night. Clouds were rare. Jets from the Cypriot air force were known to have pursued them dramatically bombarding the White Cotton wool with silver oxide in an attempt to make some rain. I had been told that citizens cheered and a hooted mockingly on the ground urging them to greater victory. From 12 o'clock until two the majority of people took a siesta and slept. The street were deadly quite and many schools which had started at 6:30pm closed entirely for the day. If

you're born into such a climate in such a lifestyle is second nature. To northern Europeans its a cruel master sucking vitality. How I yearned at times be a good Scottish cold winter with scarves and gloves, snow and rain.

I had a shower room in the small yard at the back of the House. It trickled hot-water meanly if it worked at all. It's only blessing was the foot-thick walls which offered shade. Kykos had an extra two hours between 2 and 4 o'clock. When I was teaching there I had two hours at lunchtime to kill. A colleague mentioned to me that on the top of a near by skyscraper was a roof garden created by the building's caretaker. I went to explore and found a delightful collection of trees and ferns arranged creatively in shady corridors.

The view from the top of the building was magnificent: the whole Nicosia stretched out before me in the brilliant sunshine. The fuselage of aircraft coming into land at Nicosia airport glinted and in the distance I could see the beginnings of the valley rich in fruit. As I sat there one day the lift came up to the top the building and a man stepped out. He saw me immediately but walked first around the garden inspecting the trees that had been planted in brown pots. At last he had completed a circuit and stood before me. He was dressed only in an open-neck shirt and spoke to me in Greek. I asked him if he spoke English.

"you like the garden?"

"it's fantastic".

"I build some years ago".

"do you look after this building?"

"yes".

His name was Michael Papagos and he was the caretaker living in the basement of a block that was mostly insurance companies and other business offices. Over the next few months I met him many times during the blazing hot afternoons. We sat together in the groves which he had created and spoke of many things. He was a surprisingly knowledgeable man and knew the history and geography of the island well. When he laughed his whole body shook. I told him I was a schoolteacher and missionary. His wife had died some years before. Sometimes he bought prickly pears from street vendors and sat peeling them with a sharp knife and feeding me segments.

One day he invited me for coffee in his flat in the basement. As I stepped inside I saw photographs on the walls, no doubt family members.

"This is my wife and two sisters. See how she smiles. Such a smile. Here is my brother working on his farm. This is my uncle and parents. This is my brother. This..." He had stop before the phonograph of a young man with just the beginnings of a pencil moustache. Head-and-shoulders shot.

"This was my son".

"what happened to him?"

"he was shot by the British in 1959".

. I felt a jolt like touching a high powered current.

He showed me documents, photocopies and newspaper clippings.

In the autumn of 1954 the Greek prime minister, who had been personally offended by Anthony Eden's dismissive treatment of the case for enosis (in a conversation in Athens in September 1953), and Archbishop Makarios both gave the go-ahead to Grivas who, in hiding in Cyprus, had called his underground organization EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston, National Organization of Freedom Fighters) and himself 'Dighenis' to launch a Campaign of sabotage. The transmitters of the Cyprus Broadcasting Station were blown up and a series of simultaneous, but less effective, explosions took place across the island.

As the EOKA revolt gathered momentum and casualties on both sides mounted, Britain tried to escape. Field Marshal Harding, who had been sent out as Governor, bore with him a painstakingly crafted formula, explaining that whereas self-determination was not on at the moment for strategic reasons and 'on account of the consequences on the relations between NATO Powers in the Eastern Mediterranean' the situation might change if self-government showed itself in practice to be 'capable of safeguarding the interests of all sections of the community'. Grivas, anxious to sabotage any negotiations at all, ended any chances of agreement by a series of massive explosions in Nicosia as the Colonial Secretary arrived.

The Field Marshal instituted martial law on the island and severe penalties were announced for any acts of sabotage. A group of schoolboys in their last year at school had climbed up to the school roof and pulled down the British flag. Knowing full well that British soldiers would come quickly to put it back again, one of them had the idea to grease the ladder on to the roof. Sure enough a platoon was quickly dispatched and one soldier Davy Macpherson ordered to climb up. The grease worked, the soldier fell breaking his neck and dying. After an inquiry one schoolboy was blamed.

He was the son of the man I was now speaking to. A moment of great fear passed through me. Had he lured me down to the flat for revenge? Was this how my life was going to end? A great pain passed very quickly through my body and no sooner had I thought these miserable thoughts than they dispelled. He looked at me and smiled. "Coffee?" He told the other less dramatic stories of his family, quite normal and calm. When I returned later to school I looked at the young faces in front of me and thought about his son.

I went one day to visit the temple of Aphrodite. I had been teaching faithfully that it was the misuse of love which had initially caused the problems with mankind but, as I stood between the pillars, cracked and ruined, I understood the gaze of the priestess and the worship of the followers. As I walked over the mosaic floors I heard the quiet padding of naked soles and imagined the rustle of silk gowns as they fell to the floor. Young virgins came to be ritually deflowered in the springtime.

Harry gusted into the staff room just as I was leaving. "Five minutes Mr. Roberson?" (he was always very formal in front of the rest of the staff). As we walked along the corridor he told me that he had a Russian diplomat in his office. He had come into the Institute hoping to arrange English lessons in his flat. Boris Polliaikov was wearing a grey suit and tie. He shook hands with me and began to explain his request. His flat and was very close to the Institute. I realised of course that Harry had chosen me probably because he owed me more money than anybody else. He named a price which was very good and thus began six months of my teaching Boris who was a liaison officer with the port authorities at Famagusta and the Russian merchant marine, Morflot. He himself had been the captain of many vessels.

I liked Boris enormously. His wife, Tamara always made the coffee and we would pour over the newspapers while she retreated to another room. He had a six year-old daughter called Lada who would skip into the room to gaze at me until her father sent her away. He was of course, as a diplomat a relatively orthodox Communist but I avoided politics as far as possible. One day Boris asked me if we could stop our lessons half-an-hour earlier to allow a short session with his wife. I agreed and began to teach her as well.

Boris was a writer of short stories and had had some published in Pravda. I received a telegram from Doris and Dennis asking me to come back to Britain and very quickly to meet Reverend Moon who was going to be visiting. I did not at that time have enough money for the air fare. Boris owed me some money and having checked at the travel agent, there was the opportunity of a cheap flight in a few days. I quickly when run to the House and Tameara answered the door. I tried to explain to her that I needed the money Boris Owed me. She was very nervous, misunderstood and telephone to the embassy. Within five minutes as sombre looking man now entered the flat. I tried to explain to him that I needed to leave the country quickly and mentioned and mentioned teaching both Boris and his wife. She looked alarmed at this and the man stared at her. I did not then realise that teaching a diplomat's wife was forbidden under embassy rules. The man made another telephone call and 30 minutes later Boris arrived looking very angry. An angry conversation in Russian between the two men and I left knee and as Boris said to me "I will be in touch".

no sooner had arrived home than someone knocked the door. Two Greek Cypriot policeman and a waiting car. They showed any identification and asked me to come with them. We went, not to a police station but a large house on the outskirts of town. I was shown into a room with a desk and two chairs on either side. I waited for about an hour. The door opened and three men came in. One of them sat to the desk reading something and the other two walked about the room.

"why did you come to this country?"

"I am a missionary with a Christian organisation."

"you know Stavros Alexandra?"

"yes. He is the headmaster of a school I'm teaching at."

"and....?"

"and what?"

"you're sympathetic to Stavros Alexandra?"

"what do you mean "sympathetic?""

"Where were you on Tuesday night?"

"I was at home".

"was anybody with you?"

"No. I was alone."

"This organisation you belong to, is there many of you here in Cyprus?"

"No. I am the only one".

They questioned me for many hours. As one finished the other would begin. For three days I stayed in his big house being questioned by the same men over and over. The questions were repetitive and increasingly meaningless. Did I know this person and that person. Had I visited Greece many times? Why did I live so close to Makarios? Who were my friends? And eventually, after three days they asked me why did I meet Boris Polliaikov so often?

"I'm teaching him English".

"what do you talk about?"

On the 4th day a very polite Englishman from the embassy came into the room. "We have been contacted by the Cypriot ministry of home affairs. You have seven days to leave the island and are now persona non grata. I don't know what you been up to but you had better go. Things are hotting up here old chap.

When I returned to Prousis street I found a note from Boris asking me to come to the Russian embassy as soon as possible. It was dated the same day.

I stopped outside the heavy gates and rang the bell. A secretary came. I showed her the note and she turned around and waved. The door buzzed and opened and I walked in behind her. The entrance was full of people. Some looked at me. Boris appeared looking very grim-faced and ushered me into a room with a large table. He sat down opposite me and produced six months of records of our lessons.

"do you agree that on February 27th we spoke about the future tense, oranges and making tea?"

"Well, yes, I think so."

"do you agree that on March 2nd we spoke about the past tense, kitchen utensils and shoes?"

"yes".

He was cold and utterly formal as he placed down each paper on the table. When we had finished this hypothetical account he asked me to sign. The meeting was over. He left with me to the door and out sides on the steps he hissed "who put you up to this? My career is finished."

The iron gate closed behind me and I could feel Boris eyes boring holes like bullets at my back. But he paid me and it was enough for the ticket.