Greek Cypriot refugees after twenty-five years: the case of Argaki

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The essay which follows was written as a new concluding chapter for a Greek edition of my monograph *The heart grown bitter: a chronicle of Cypriot war refugees* (Loizos 1981). This book examined the experiences of the villagers of Argaki, before, during and immediately after the Turkish invasion of 1974. As the Greek edition, entitled *Χρονικό της Κυπριακής προσφυγιάς*, did not appear until 2001 (Loizos 2001), there was a clear case for including in it some account of how the people of Argaki had fared since 1975.[1] Indeed, the proposed translation of the monograph helped me decide to go to Cyprus, in 1999 and 2000, to do some systematic qualitative research. The essence of this was some fifty open-ended, informal conversational interviews, in which I pursued questions which had arisen after some years of reflecting on other regional displacements (Loizos 1999; 2000).

Briefly, Argaki village in NW Cyprus was a mixed village of 1,500 Greek Cypriots and 70 Turkish Cypriots when I first visited it in 1966. My father had migrated from it in 1930. I wrote my doctoral thesis about how the politics of Cyprus's first decade of independence impacted on the villagers. This thesis was written up as *The Greek Gift: politics in a Cypriot village*. But as I was correcting the proofs, in August 1974, the Argaki Greeks became refugees, as Turkey consolidated its military hold on the North of the island. So in the spring and autumn of 1975 I returned to Cyprus to witness to the distress of the people who had recently been so prosperous, and so hospitable to me. The book, which tried to make sense of this turmoil, took twice as long to write as the doctoral monograph.

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[1] This essay is a postscript to the English-language text of 1981, but has not previously been published in English.

In subsequent years I made a number of brief visits to Cyprus, to attend conferences, to make a documentary film about a particular refugee family,[2] or for holidays. Although these trips often led to some notes being jotted down, I did not for many years do serious field research. This was finally remedied in the two visits which led to this essay.

Throughout this period there has been the recurrent mirage of a solution to the Cyprus Problem. At the time of writing (August 2002) this still eludes the island and the region. A great deal has changed since the upheavals of the 1960s and 1974, but here, as in my previous writings, I have tried to foreground the fortunes and the experiences of Argaki's Greek Cypriots, rather than focus on the national and international developments, about which others write more expertly than I can do. As an author, I no longer have Argaki to myself, since in 2000 a book was published in Greek written by Christodoulos Pipis, *Argaki: 1800-1974*, a work of 649 pages, full of factual information about village families, and celebrating the activities of the EOKA militia group formed in the village.

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The story of the next twenty-five years has to be dramatic, but my purpose here is not to dramatise further, but to report and analyse soberly. The main themes of the following pages can be stated briefly: for a variety of reasons, the Greek Cypriot refugees in general, and the Argaki villagers in particular, did not allow themselves, and were not encouraged, to be idle, apathetic, a burden, a liability. Assisted by a determined government, by unexpected windfalls, and by international aid, many of the refugees re-invented themselves economically as productive citizens; a few, undoubtedly, fell upon stony ground, gave in to despair, were laid low by illness, of body and mind. A few older people stepped back and understandably allowed their mature children to shoulder the burdens of family provision. But many, perhaps most, made extraordinary efforts to provide for themselves and their dependents.

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[2] The film was entitled *Sophie's people: eventful lives* (1985).

So, the various styles of coping with dislocation and destitution can be seen as a triumph of human creative energy over negative circumstances, a transcendence. But also, and this is the second equally important theme, I see a whole cohort of Argaki people as deeply, irreversibly, emotionally marked by having been forced out of their villages, and living through these years with a powerful sense of injustice, and dissatisfaction. Because the possibility of a return has never been ruled out by the rhetoric of national politics, the Hope of Return remains a troubling and painful possibility. Even had such a hope been ruled out early on (as happened in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne), the sense of injustice would have remained powerful. The third theme of importance is that their children seem less deeply affected, and capable of making an important distinction between their parents' unsatisfactory lives and their own.

Emergency planning: refugees as a resource

At Independence in 1960, UNDP persuaded President Makarios to set up a Planning Bureau, as a super-ministry to co-ordinate other ministries. Under its guidance the performance of the Greek Cypriot-controlled sector of the island's economy, in spite of major political disruption in the first fifteen years, was respectable but hardly dramatic. Government debt was kept low. Some diversification was encouraged, to break out of colonial autarky, because the island had relied principally on mining, agriculture, a tiny manufacturing sector, and a little tourism for foreign earnings. After 1964, the situation for the Turkish Cypriots was very different, because they were operating an enclave/siege economy, under the pressure of an embargo on many materials, put in place by the Greek Cypriots.

In August 1974 the Greek Cypriot South had suddenly to cope with around 180,000 refugees, in most cases quite destitute. The situation was that roughly one in every four Greek Cypriots in the South was a refugee.[3] When Greece had been confronted by a similar problem in 1922, there were hunger and disease deaths

[3] In international law the Greek Cypriots are "internally displaced persons", as "refugee" is used for people forced to move from one *state* to another. But I shall call them "refugees" for simplicity, and because that is the term most commonly used by them and most other people in Cyprus.

running at 6,000 a month for at least two years, and massive suffering for many years. How and why was this scenario avoided in Cyprus 50 years later?

The answer is that the political leaders and civil servants met the crisis head-on, and took appropriate and effective measures. The Planning Bureau was a key player in this drama, and its Emergency Plans were the script. Roger Zetter has made a special study of government measures to deal with the refugees, destitute people needing housing, feeding, clothing, educating, and employment (Zetter 1982; 1991; 1992; 1998). I draw freely and gratefully on his work in the first section of this essay, and also on that of Paul Strong (1999). The planners saw beyond the immediate need for humanitarian relief, and treated the refugees, their problems and their potential as a development opportunity, rather than an economic burden. The state, on behalf of Greek Cypriots as a whole, invested heavily in the refugees' future, and the refugees were able to meet them more than halfway.

This was possible because of ethnic solidarity: the refugees were regarded by the wider society of non-displaced Greek Cypriots as victims of injustice, who had legitimate claims for succour. And there was some property – houses and land, which Turkish Cypriots were leaving behind as they set out for the North of Cyprus. However, there was by no means enough Turkish Cypriot property to meet new needs. At the very least, four times as many Greeks were coming into the South as Turks were going North.

The Planning Bureau produced the 1975 Emergency Action Plan. This had the following components: proposals for new industrial enterprise zones, and for export credits to boost production; proposals for infra-structural construction; proposals for welfare benefits in health, education and housing for the refugees; small-business loans, loans to farmers, and proposals to re-employ civil servants and refugees otherwise unprovided for. There was to be a major public housing programme, which was to employ refugee labour and skills, put money into refugee pockets, and roofs over the heads of many of them, all at the same time. There had been virtually no public housing in Cyprus prior to 1974: Cypriots had been building new or renovated houses on marriage, in the plains villages and in the cities on plots of land

separated from the plots and houses of immediate neighbours (Loizos 1975).

The Planning Bureau decided to locate major public housing sites on the edges of the island's main towns, close to the new industrial enterprise zones, even though most of the refugees were rural people from farming villages. This meant people lived near employment opportunities. These houses are typically much smaller than most villagers were building for themselves before 1974, and they are not detached, but joined-together rows or blocks of houses. Because the official position of the Greek Cypriot political leadership was that all the refugees had to have the right of return to their original properties, this public housing was designated "temporary", and although it was not luxurious, and some estates look dilapidated today, this was unlike the insubstantial pre-fabricated housing which was put up on bomb-damaged sites in the UK after 1945, but of a more permanent construction.

By no means all the refugees ended up in such purpose-built housing. Other government-funded schemes were also initiated, in which the state made available building land, and some cash towards owner-supervised constructions, in densities closer to previous cultural preferences. Poorer people with less education, and less well-paid labour market prospects went into the "row" house estates, and many white-collar people, teachers and civil servants sought to avoid the schemes, and to build their own homes. It depended on many factors.

For farmers, the government did three things: first, it wiped the slate clean on their pre-war debts to the Co-operative Savings Societies and Agricultural Banks. This, as we shall see, was special treatment, but carefully considered. Secondly, it allocated them unused land or abandoned Turkish land. Thirdly, it lent them money for planting and subsistence without significant collateral, a break from pre-war practices. In the first year after the war the government issued a general exhortation to plant every square inch of the South which would take a crop, "even on your house roofs". At the time I missed this exhortation and was puzzled, in September 1975, to see a Limassol police sergeant and a Nicosia secondary schoolteacher growing *fasolia* (beans) in urban flower gardens. They were, I now realise, responding patriotically to the government's plea. In fact, the

response was so successful that there was a glut for many crops, prices collapsed, and many refugee farmers lost money. This may have led to a shake-out in the farming sector, which was said by economists to have been under-productive before the war. In 2000 a number of Argaki farmers were still farming intensively, and effectively.

Refugee civil servants were treated differently from the farmers. First, and crucially, the state decided to keep them all on the payroll, although, in agreement with both right-wing and left-wing trade unions, there was a general 25% wage cut throughout the unionised sectors, which included most civil servants and teachers. Some of the guaranteed redeployment made a certain amount of economic sense – refugee children needed teaching, so refugee teachers could be put to work. It is doubtful whether this applied to all civil servants. How, for example, could all the Department of Agriculture's refugee staff be efficiently redeployed when the land under government control had shrunk by more than a third? I have seen no proper analysis of these issues – but analysis must have gone on in the Planning Bureau. There was, of course, the politics of refugee incorporation to be considered, as well as the economics.

However, the civil servants were not indulged in other ways. In cases known to me, for example, pre-war debts had to be honoured: a young schoolteacher from a poor family in Argaki had, in 1973, just completed an impressive house in her natal village, by taking a loan from the teachers' union savings fund. Although she had to abandon this house, and in the end build a second one with a new loan, her pre-war loan for the lost house had to be paid back. "I had to build two houses," she said. I understand this was typical, rather than exceptional. But an Argaki farmer's wife saw the policy rationale immediately. "It's because they still had their salaries," she suggested. Unlike the farmers! The teacher remains bitter to this day, and bitter not only with Turkey, but with her own government. "It was an injustice" is how she sees it.

Businessmen could also be treated tough-mindedly by the Planning Bureau over issues of equity. One major employer known to me (not from Argaki) had run an island-wide bus-line. He had lost a lot of vehicles, buildings and other facilities in 1974, and he had two hundred employees on his payroll. He inevitably

had debts to major banks. Because he still had assets in the South, the government took him to court on a number of occasions in attempts at debt recovery, while he did his best to fight the case and meanwhile delayed as best he could. He said he could see the government's point – they were faced with the possible collapse of the banking system. There are three major banks in Cyprus, two with majority holdings by the Church. And many Cypriots had, before 1974, borrowed from these banks to buy land as savings and speculation. So, a collapse of the banks would have hit nearly everyone, refugees and non-refugees alike.

Because there were all kinds of "grey area" people, who might have claimed refugee exemptions or benefits, the Planning Bureau had to think hard about whom to treat how. In another poignant case known to me, two Nicosia residents, born in adjacent villages, and married to each other, had white-collar jobs in Nicosia. They had inherited substantial landholdings in their villages, and saw to it that the land was planted out with citrus trees. To do this, they had undertaken substantial debts. In 1974 they lost at least 5,000 orange trees, but were not classified as "refugees", nor yet as "farmers". No debt relief, and no expectation of future income. They also remain bitter to this day, but their bitterness is directed more at Turkey than at their own government.

Those who were labourers before the war were helped to find employment by the construction of refugee housing in urban areas, within reach of light industry. The Cyprus Government encouraged (with export credits and start-up loans) the manufacture of shoes and clothing, furniture, and fittings of all kinds, and the export of canned fruits and juices, all aimed at the nearby Gulf and Maghrebian markets. Because of the oil price rises of the early 1970s, oil-rich states were having consumption booms, and Cyprus enjoyed the comparative advantage of being near to these markets. At the same time, there was a major expansion of mass tourism in the South, in which hotel construction featured prominently and which created a new service sector, with jobs for waiters, chambermaids, cooks, bar staff, and many associated trades.

The civil war in Beirut was an ill wind for the Lebanese, but an externality which blew some good to Cyprus. Some wealthy Lebanese decided to sit the war out in the island, in its newly-

constructed tourist hotels. With the collapse of Beirut as a financial centre, Cypriots were able to take on some financial services work. Cyprus is second only to the USA and Canada in the proportion of the population who are graduates. The necessary skills were present as human capital in the 1980s to take advantage of this opportunity. Such is the generally high level of social aspirations among younger Cypriots that in the 1990s the South has imported labour – men from Syria to work in agriculture, and women from Sri Lanka and the Philippines to work as maids, nannies, and care workers for the elderly, and kitchen staff in the tourist sector, while Cypriot women go out to work in white-collar jobs. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe has sent young women and men to many countries, and Cyprus is no exception. In 1992, foreign labour was 6% of the labour force. It was closer to 10% by 2000.

I must also mention, in the human capital and graduate context, that for some years after 1974 significant numbers of Cypriots went as short-term labour migrants to the Gulf, and to countries such as Bulgaria, to work in construction, transport, and other sectors. Remittances to support parents, grandparents and siblings were important in this period.

So, to summarise the overall macro-economic picture: Cyprus, which at Independence had a low level of state indebtedness, and a predominantly rural and agricultural economy, after 1974 was challenged to absorb a large destitute but skilled population. It did this by neo-Keynsian or Roosevelt New Deal methods of funding appropriate public works – refugee housing, tourist hotels, factories, roads, airports, dams – which led to a construction boom, and enabled increased tourism, with new seasonal employment opportunities.

The level of public indebtedness is now high, but significant economic diversification has taken place. Agriculture is no longer the lead sector for employment and GNP; there has been a boom in export manufactures, and urbanisation has continued to increase due partly to Planning Bureau housing construction decisions. However, after a decade of neo-liberal right-wing governments, the Planning Bureau has been dissolved.

Where Roger Zetter stressed Planning Bureau strategies, Paul Strong, an economic historian, subjected "the Cyprus miracle" (referring to the South alone) to sceptical analysis. He

gives private investment an important additional role: Cyprus, for example, has developed the fourth largest maritime fleet in the world. Tourism took off before the 1974 watershed partly due to state investment, partly due to local enterprise, and partly due to appropriate externalities such as cheap air travel, and rising wealth in Northern Europe. He points out that after 1974 there was a five-year concordat between state, the private sector, and the unions, which dramatically reduced days lost by strikes. But as any good Marxist will tell you, in such an accommodation, someone is being held down. Recent work by Prodromos Panayiotopoulos (1996; 2000) has analysed the ability of businessmen in Cyprus to connect up with diaspora Cypriots in the UK, and organise cheap refugee labour to service the British clothing market. In the late 1970s and early 1980s this was important, but this kind of employment has now shifted away from Cyprus, as Cypriot labour costs have risen, and the Cypriot businessmen are going off the island for their cheap labour. Panayiotopoulos suggests that the sweated labour of refugee women was important here, and that many a small business fortune has been built on this factor.

Women's labour

Before the war, in the village I studied – but the distinction was more general – there was an important status difference between women who did and did not "work for strangers". There is a special word in Greek, ξενοδουλεύω, which means exactly that. Ideally, Greek Cypriot husbands preferred that their wives should not need to work outside the home, or family farm or family shop. Argaki men would boast to me about their wives never having worked for strangers. If a husband and wife needed additional farm labour, it was often exchanged with neighbours without money changing hands, or poorer women were hired and paid by the day. But they were pitied. Roughly half the households in the village in 1968 had women who were not taking paid work, not working for strangers, as they would put it.

Women working in farm employment appear in national economic statistics as "unwaged". As regards pre-war rural Cyprus, in many cases these women would have proved to be working on their own land, or rented land, with their husbands. They neither expected nor needed their husbands to pay them a

wage. For them, the Big Issue was that they are working for the family, and more particularly for the well-being, the education and the future marriages of their children. Having recently stood alongside some of them in the fields they were working, I have a strong sense that the development of feminist classifications of these women as "unwaged", and therefore invisible in the national economy, misses the cultural point. It should also be appreciated that we are not talking about patrilineal patriarchy in Cyprus: Greek Cypriot women are virtually to a woman either the full owners or half-owners of the houses they live in and, before 1974, of significant agricultural land. There can, of course, be embedded domestic authority disagreements, when a husband overrules a wife. But Cypriot women's property rights were and still are a highly significant aspect of their status as women.

For the refugees I know about, 1974 changed the status distinction between women who took paid work and those who did not. Some Argaki farmers managed to continue to work as farmers and, in the cases known to me, their wives assisted them. They were still operating within the pre-1974 value system. But where before the war only the unfortunate "poorer" Argaki girls worked in fruit-packing factories, shops and offices, after 1974 it became common for young women and many married women to take paid employment. Older refugee women, particularly from previously wealthier farming families, who have had to take factory jobs for the last 25 years to see their children through school and university, tell their stories of getting by in this way with involuntary tears in their eyes, because there is a strong sense of having come down a long way in the world. Their daughters can and do see things rather differently – but they are often doing more attractive jobs than their mothers did, and are getting better paid for what they do, a fact they readily appreciate.

1974, then, was probably a watershed for refugee women, and they were catapulted by need into paid work, regardless of their pre-war status. Non-refugee women moved into paid employment on a slower trajectory, but they too moved. That they had to do so is probably consistent with the perception of most Cypriot families that they could not make ends meet, educate and marry off their children, and reach reasonable modern and increasingly

urban consumption standards, without wives working for wages where possible. The change the refugees experienced as a hardship and humiliation forced upon them was soon to become an unremarkable fact of most women's lives. But, as the refugees are quick to tell you, refugee women were *forced* to make the change, and the others were free not to do so.

The micro-picture: Argaki refugees and employment

1) The farmers: some had succeeded in escaping with productive machinery – tractors, trailers, cultivator rigs. These allowed them to work uncultivated land in the South. Some found abandoned Turkish land; some rented land owned by Greeks; some obtained permission to farm government-owned land. In 2000 there were still a number of active farmers from Argaki, who had farmed intensively for the previous 25 years. Truck and bulldozer drivers were easily re-employed if they had brought the machines out of the war zone. If they had not, they still had their skills to sell.

2) The professionals: young doctors, lawyers and other specialists have sought or continued employment, and some have been highly successful, while others have more modest incomes in government service. Some teachers set up private education establishments and worked a major second shift after their state-paid day job was over.

3) Those who needed wages but lacked specialist skills or capital looked in several directions. A number of Argaki wives, some of whom who had never taken paid work before, have worked for many years in home-based activities (lace-making, cooked food production) or in light industry, packing fruit and vegetables. Others have worked in the tourist sector, as domestics. Men have worked as chefs, barmen or drivers. More educated and younger men have worked as salesmen.

4) Self-employment: numbers of Argaki people started a business of one kind or another, particularly taverns, restaurants, coffee-shops, a car rental firm, a bakery. Some combine a modest white-collar job with something else at home, e.g. part-time tailoring, and breeding rabbits. One retired civil servant has been investing in a quarry. One farming family bought a house-plot in Nicosia and later sold it for a handsome profit, which has been re-invested in growing flowers. One young college teacher invested

in a college ably managed by his wife's cousin and has seen the investment flourish. The most favoured form of investment until recently was speculative land purchase, for later building development, but of late Cyprus has acquired a Stock Exchange, a mixed blessing.

The overall picture, then, has been of enterprise and hard work, in a generally enabling economic climate created by what to a layman looks like successful state management, and selective targeted support which takes equity issues into account. Among those equity decisions, there were some which rankled deeply. The government decided that the refugees they would help were those who would have been normally resident in particular places, now under Turkish control, in 1974. If, for example, you had been born in Argaki, and owned land there, but had migrated to Nicosia *before* 1974, you were not entitled to support from the state as a refugee. To people affected in this way, this seemed then and still seems like "rough justice". If you have lost property, and cannot even visit your place of birth, why are you *not* a refugee, they ask? If the rash anthropologist asks "in the same sense as those who lost everything?", he may get grudging agreement. The way such people comfort themselves from the pain of such state-led injustices is to say: "But at least we did not lose someone."

The Hope of Return

Some authors (Al Rasheed 1994 ; Zetter 1998) have written of a Myth of Return, because they are thinking of the ways in which refugees remember their home communities in an idealised way (as labour migrants have often been observed to do) and dream of going back even when the odds are strongly against it. I prefer to write of the Hope of Return. It seems to me that the Hope of Return in the South of Cyprus has to be understood in terms both of refugee aspirations and of the political environment created by the Greek Cypriot leadership since 1974. That has portrayed Turkey's intervention as an out-of-the-blue illegal act, and stands squarely on a human rights platform – that all the refugees must be permitted to return to their homes, and that free movement and unrestricted ownership of property must be restored, the so-called "Three Freedoms". This is not the place to debate this policy, or its effects on popular attitudes. But it has

meant that a Hope of Return, even if it eventually proves chimerical, a mirage, has been strongly articulated and become the dominant official discourse of Greek Cypriot society. No one ever says in public that return is impossible. Greek Cypriots are particularly determined to reject Rauf Denktash's description of the 1974 partition as a "fait accompli". To accept this definition would be seen as a collective humiliation, and to deny it is seen as a collective duty.

This applies particularly in the school system: the Ministry of Education is always headed by a Greek nationalist, and the Church is always consulted about the appointment. In schools, the children of primary refugees have been encouraged to find out from parents and grandparents about their villages of origin, and the state television service runs regular programmes about individual occupied villages, under the heading "I do not forget". In the 1970s the Bank of Cyprus offered prizes for the best pictures by refugee children about the war, flight, and the loss of homes. Thus, what refugees feel and think about their lost homes is given massive reinforcement by state and society, and can only ambiguously be treated as straightforward and uncomplicated. Statements of connectedness, belonging and attachment are given very wide support. I once suggested to a refugee relative who was a schoolteacher that it might be better for the children of refugees *not* to tell them their villages are in the occupied area. She took a deep breath and told me angrily for at least twenty minutes all the reasons why I was in her eyes utterly wrong.

Beyond "refugee generations"

Zetter and other writers on refugees have written of "first and second generation refugees", but I think this needs both refinement and some further attention to the cultural and historical specifics of a given refugee situation. I would suggest five sociological categories of persons for whom the impact and implications of the 1974 displacement must be understood. These categories allow proper account of the most important Greek Cypriot life-goals: to see one's children educated and securely married.

1) Those who by 1974 had accomplished major life-goals, i.e. who had helped all their children marry, and whose children

were secure in jobs and homes in the South, and not in the occupied North. I have no data for this theoretical category, but there must have been small numbers of such people outside my sample. A family resident in Argaki (or some other occupied community) but whose children were all resident in Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos and Larnaca, would have been examples.

2) Those who had married off some of their children, but now saw this provision devalued, because these children had had to flee from those hard-earned homes. In some cases their skilled, adult children took over from them the burdens of re-providing for themselves, their parents and younger siblings. In other cases, men of forty or more had to start all over again a process of economic support to some or all of their children, but knowing that, as soon as they could, these children would start to provide for themselves.

3) Those who after 1974 faced the full burdens of child-provision, whose children were mostly so young as to be still fully dependent. Whatever these people had achieved prior to 1974, they had to start some or all of the process again. In some cases this meant repeating ten or fifteen years of hard work and savings, but from a position of destitution. In other cases, they had recently married and only just produced children, but had lost the family home and, perhaps, productive land or a shop.

4) Those who in 1974 were unmarried young adults, not yet burdened by the duty of provision for children. Some of these were still partly concerned with support for parents and for other family members – siblings, particularly. Many would feel the need to study hard and start earning rapidly, to ease burdens on parents.

5) Those who in 1974 were small children, or as yet unborn. They have certainly grown up hearing that they have connections to a village in the "Occupied Zone".

Among the Argaki refugees, it would be fair to say that those who had lived fifteen or twenty years in the village, or more, and *would have stayed there*, other things being equal, are most passionately interested in the issue of return. They are clear that their lives will remain deeply unsatisfactory if return proves impossible. They speak of their fear of dying without returning to live in the village. Some simply speak of seeing it, but most imply wishing to live in it as before.

It is not the case that, in a simple, linear sense, interest in the village falls away the less the time a person has spent in it. Some who never lived there, being born after 1974, and with no simple personal memories, but only their parents' memories to inform them, seem interested in visiting, in possibly living there, and in their property rights. Others, who left the village at 5 or 10, wish their property rights to be honoured, but have no strong wish to live there, merely a curiosity about it. They are clear that their lives are in Limassol and Nicosia, wherever their young children are, their jobs are, and their homes are. At best, they consider they would have to make a calculation of self-interest if return were suddenly possible. The region would have to be developing; there would have to be appropriate work.

If you ask a three-year-old child today where it is from, it will pipe up "Argaki, Morphou", and be rewarded by parental approval. But how much weight should be placed on this? I had conducted an interview with a woman who was 17 when she left the village, and who had been explaining her complex feelings of identity, which included working – but not living – in the former Turkish quarter of Paphos, and having lived more of her life outside of Argaki than in it. At this point a 14-year-old secondary schoolgirl came into the shop – she had been born when her parents had been refugees for ten years. She was introduced to me by my informant as being "from Argaki" too. "Ask her what she thinks," I was told. As it happened I had the previous day run into her grandfather in another town. Her father is a lawyer, and had grown up in Argaki. I asked her if the word "refugee" describes her? Yes and no, she says. She thinks of herself as a Paphos girl, and an urban person. She is interested in any entitlements she may have, and she is concerned with justice for the refugees more generally. "Perhaps I ought to feel a stronger identification with refugees," she adds, thoughtfully, as she departs. Her connection to 1974 sits lightly on her, it seems, and it is better for her, and for Cyprus, that this is the case.

To conclude this section: there has never been the slightest likelihood that the older Argaki refugees would feel that they could set aside the hope of return, both because of their own feelings of attachment, but also because of the formal negotiation position taken by national political leaders. However, not all

younger people who identify themselves as being of refugee origins feel an intense personal concern about return. But they cannot always tell their parents this – it would look like a denial of earlier parental sacrifices, and indeed, the meaning of their parents' recent lives. In front of their parents, all express interest in return. Away from their parents, they put different emphases on these issues, talk about the needs of their children, and about not wishing to "uproot" them. I have even talked with Argaki people in the city of Melbourne, who miss Argaki and visit Cyprus from time to time, but who point out that with three sons married to Melbourne girls, and their grandchildren happy in Melbourne, their own lives are grounded, we could say earthed, where their descendants are, however much they miss Cyprus, their village, friends and relatives.

Surviving 1974: three reactions

I wish now to report representative summary statements made to me by people looking back on how they have managed their affairs over the last twenty-five years. I will not sketch in the wider social contexts.

The Embittered. Some persons, particularly those who felt their previous achievements, or future wealth and security, were wiped out in 1974, no matter how much they have laboured to see their children well-established, seem to have – speaking metaphorically – wounds which do not heal. Like Philoctetes. They may dwell on the injustice of Turkey's actions, the lack of appreciation by Turkish Cypriots of Greek Cypriot moderates, or they may simply insist that they are fated to die without seeing or enjoying the village again. They may speak of the cynical self-interested behaviour of major powers, the USA and the UK being the most prominent.

The Undefeated. A number of people summed up their refugee lives with some form of the phrase "ταλαιπωρηθήκαμε, αλλά είμαστε καλά": "we have been through the mill, but we are all right." Sometimes they reversed the key words, to give a slightly different emphasis. The "είμαστε καλά" does not mean "we are just fine". 1974 is still seen as a major injustice, and they still insist on their rights to their property in Argaki. But they wish to be judged on their personal achievements, the *transcendence* of

what was imposed on them. This is to drop down a level from the refugee-wide statements of the first group, and it is to stress personal specificities. Some of these people add that they still want justice for Cyprus. I would characterise them as deeply marked by dislocation, but not maimed by it, and troubled, but not obsessed by their losses.

The Empathisers – refugees by identification with parents. This third group of people, who were typically teenagers or younger in 1974, always answer questions about where they are from by replying "Argaki, Morphou", usually adding that they are refugees if explanation is needed. But the adults make important distinctions between their experiences and those of their parents and grandparents. They may have clear memories of the village, or their memories may have a dream-like quality. They may have felt as children that they ought not to "ask for" things which their parents would not be able to provide. But if they have made friends and spent important school years away from the village, and if they have married and built a home they are pleased with, they tend to speak of an option of return to the village as a matter which would require careful assessment, and not as a matter which would be decided by a simple, strong emotional pull from the village as place of primary experience. They may know a lot about the village, and have a positive sense of their fellow-villagers as distinctive and generally rather attractive people.

Some of the more interesting conversations I listened to were between these people and their parents, over what they would do if return became an option. Someone who five minutes earlier had stated clearly all the difficulties and uncertainties that return would present, would then hear their mother saying that conditions in the region might improve rapidly, allowing a transfer of the child's employment to the region, and would then modify the position to make their mother happy. On other occasion, a man in his mid-forties said: "Look, I am a partner in a major firm, here in Limassol, and my house is here, and my life is here. I cannot say this to my parents, but I would not return. It just wouldn't be practical." Another man, aged 10 in 1974, whose employment situation might have allowed return and who had just told a very moving story about growing up with a feeling of strong

memories of dislocation: "My children have grown up *here* [in Limassol]. Am I going to make *them* refugees because their father and mother once lived in Argaki more than 25 years ago?" His wife, however, aged 5 in 1974, said that the word refugee described her ελάχιστα, meaning "hardly at all". She had never felt deprived of anything in childhood, and she has never felt any stigmatisation. Her house is a substantial modern one on the outskirts of Limassol, and her preoccupation is with her children's well-being.

Some of this younger group are still passionately interested in the village, and some say they would go if the opportunity arose. My guess is that if life is less than satisfactory where one is, the appeal of the imagined village community is all the stronger.

Lots of people of all ages talk with feeling about the difficulty of relatives being separated by dispersal, and not knowing all one's relatives, not recognising old schoolmates whom one hasn't encountered for many years. But they would in my view have the same thoughts if they were simply people who had moved to one of the towns through social mobility. If they heard me say this, as I sometimes did, they would remind me that they had not moved voluntarily. Normal migrants have the option of returning periodically to reconnect with village life. Refugees do not.

Trying to conserve community

Cypriot Greek villages and urban neighbourhoods have churches with protective patron saints. The Argaki patron saint is Ayios Ioannis Prodromos (St John the Baptist), and his ritual day in the Orthodox calendar is 7 January. I asked if his day had been observed by Argaki refugees in their refugee context. It turned out that it had been: the Church of Petros and Pavlos in Limassol had been chosen for a special evening service every 7 January for many years. Announcements had been placed in newspapers to tell people, and they had come from Nicosia and Paphos, as well as some villages. The village priest had conducted the service, and afterwards the villagers had gone off to a *kentron* for a meal together. "People felt better after this," I was told. But participation had not included everyone from Argaki. I only heard about this event late in my research, but when I asked a woman

with six children and a low-earning husband if she knew about it, she did not. She had worked as a chambermaid in hotels, and was clearly short of time, energy, and money. Had she known about it, she still might not have been able to take part.

A different kind of community was suggested by an attempt to create a "non-political" club for refugee villagers. However, this did not succeed. Such a club had been started in the village in 1973 and had taken the name "Olympos". However, in July 1974, the Secretary sent a telegram of congratulation in the name of the "Olympos Club" to Nikos Sampson when the Greek Army and EOKA B installed him as "President". It was reportedly the first such telegram to be sent in Cyprus, and many Argaki people were ashamed and disgusted when they heard this. So when, in the refugee condition, moves were made to start a new club to bring the Argaki people together, with the same name, Olympos, most villagers decided to ignore it. But there is a coffee-shop in an old quarter of Limassol run by a man from Argaki. He started it in 1975, and when I visited in 2000 he was still running it, and there were a dozen men from Argaki and neighbouring villages there, playing cards and watching television.

Conclusion

My concern here has been with refugee capacities for rebuilding disrupted lives. There has been emphasis on the range of social factors which distinguish one family's trajectory from that of another, and with different "generations" in terms of pre-war experience, of met or unmet responsibilities, and of the portion of economic life which has had to be "repeated" to see children educated and married off. Another concern has been with how far the original dislocation, with its loss of access to accumulated savings, capital resources, and homes (practical but resonant with social symbolism), is necessarily transferred to those who are more removed, by their youthful condition and the absence of direct dependants, as they grow up.

I am left with new questions arising out of this provisional, qualitative research – fifty serious conversations packed into a few weeks. One of these concerns the health effects of the dislocation, destitution, and subsequent heroic efforts to fulfil social obligations, particularly those to children. Many refugees have

health problems in their late 50s, 60s and onwards. There are cardio-vascular problems, cancers, alcohol and smoking-related conditions. There is also a tremendous concern with improving health. But, of course, all these things can be expected in the non-refugee population at the same age. Such matters were discussed in 1977 by the psychiatrist Takis Evdokas, in a widely publicised study. I think there may be reasons to take these issues further, with a major health survey of carefully matched refugee and non-refugee populations, to see if, in practice, significant numbers of refugees have been dying younger or getting ill earlier, or from different sicknesses, than non-refugees. Many refugees themselves explain incidents of illness and death by the concept of άγχος, the pathological anxiety of having been dislocated. They may well be correct.

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