

APPENDIX IV: THE AESTHETIC VALUE OF THE AREA

Landscape, natural landmarks

River Kereus and the plane-trees along its banks

The following is a list of some of the more outstanding features in the landscape of the area:

Along its entire course through the Prokopi-Dafnoussa estate, the River Kereus, whose banks are lined with plane-trees passes through scenery of outstanding beauty, impressive variety and changing landscapes. The valley is ideal for both short walks and longer expeditions, picnics and day-trips. However, it would not be wise to introduce permanent installations, such as a campsite, into the area, as this would cause a disturbance in the habitat of the otter and probably pollute the river.

Venetian Fort in the Forest

The partially ruined Venetian Fort, which commands an impressive view of the surrounding area, is a valuable archaeological monument. To reach the Fort the visitor passes through a particularly beautiful part of the forest. Above the Fort there is a large opening in the forest, part of which has been cultivated. This is one of the most attractive spots in the whole estate, with a breath-taking view of the pine forests and rugged slopes of Mount Kandili. It is also one of the few places in the forest where the three types of conifer (Aleppo pine, black pine and fir) may be observed together.

Below the Fort, the road to Troupi commands a splendid view of the nearby mines and part of the Kereus valley; a remarkable variety of broad-leaved evergreens are to be found in the forest at this point.

Pastures

The forest contains several pastures, many of which are extremely picturesque. The wild flowers, vegetation, sparse trees and surrounding forest all contribute to superb landscapes in spring and autumn. The prettiest pastures are located alongside the main pathway which leads from Prokopi to the fire-watch tower (and which meets and crosses the forest roads at several points), shortly before it joins the road from Dafnoussa.

Fire-Watch Tower

The fire-watch tower is located at a point which commands the clearest all-round view of the forest; from here the various zones can be discerned, along with the Kereus valley and the mines at Gerorema and Paraskevorema. The area above the watch tower where the forest road makes a slight detour is one of exceptional aesthetic and ecological interest, with magnificent views, superb expanses of forest, natural springs, etc. Single examples of very old black pines are to be found alongside this road.

Ridge

For most of its length the ridge is bare and rocky, producing a wild landscape with one or two ancient pine-trees still to be seen here and there. There is an impressive view of the sea towards the south-west (the northern part of the Gulf of Evvia), with the slopes of Mount Kandili descending abruptly and forming enormous talus fans.

Twin plane-tree

Along the road from Prokopi to Mantoudi immediately after the sign marking the boundary of Prokopi there is to the right of the road a stand of twin plane-trees. It consists of two large plane-trees joined together by a single thick branch. The linking of the two trunks by this natural bridge is impressive since at the point of contact the two trunks are welded together perfectly. The older of the two trees has a very large hollow in it and is probably several hundred years old. The peculiarity of this botanical phenomenon makes it a natural landmark which could be used for educational purposes.

The great plane-tree

Another natural landmark is the magnificent "Prokopi plane-tree", to be found close to the road on the way to Mandoudi. On the right a road branches off towards the mines at Paraskevorama; a little further on, again to the right, we go into a downhill road which ends up at an enormous plane-tree surrounded by heaps of aggregate from the mines.

In size and age this tree rivals the ancient plane-tree named after Hippocrates on the island of Cos. At the base of its trunk, whose diameter exceeds five metres, there is a huge hollow the size of a small room. This hollow is a place of refuge for a whole colony of bats.

In the spring the great plane-tree with its gigantic crown affords a truly magnificent spectacle: with its strongly contrasting colours it constitutes an oasis of greenery in the midst of the surrounding waste dumps and it offers shelter to large number of birds of many species.

The particular significance of this tree from the viewpoint of natural history, the contrast it offers to the environmental degradation that surrounds it, could be utilised for educational purposes.

Both of these trees can be reached by car, and the trip takes no more than an hour. There is an area around the plane-trees suitable for a picnic site, where benches could be provided.

Reafforestation should be carried out as soon as possible on the slopes around the plane-trees at Prokopi, as erosion threatens to choke the tree with heaps of earth. Pines (*pinus halepensis*) and plane-trees (*platanus orientalis*) could be planted as these are trees which have shown themselves to do well on the rubble excavated from the mines in the area.

Footpaths and Potential for Hiking (Map 4)

There is a dense network of forest tracks in the area, which are difficult or moderately passable. They were created for the purposes of forest exploitation and fire-protection. Unfortunately, however, these roads were constructed along the former footpaths which were used both by people and for moving herds and flocks. As a result most of the footpaths have been destroyed by road construction machinery and walkers are now obliged to follow the forest roads through the forest.

The main route for hikers, which starts at the church in Prokopi and heads in the direction of the Kandili ridge, follows mountain paths, fire-breaks and forest tracks; it takes about 2-3 hours to reach the fire-watch tower (650 metres above sea level). Since the route encounters forest roads at a number of points, it is possible to walk along only one section of the route, or to combine this route with others, e.g. in the direction of Dafnoussa.

After the watch tower the walker can follow the forest ringroad; it is an easy walk taking between 30 minutes and one hour.

At a point on this ringroad a mountain path branches off which leads to the Kandili ridge (1,000-1,225 metres above sea level). This walk takes at least 2 hours and is an arduous one, the footpath is often almost impassable and the walker is frequently in danger of losing sight of it. However, the ridge can be approached by several different routes which eventually lead to a number of points commanding fine views of the mountain. It is possible to walk down from the ridge to the sea, but it is difficult and very tiring.

The remaining walks within the estate are much shorter in length and tend on the whole to follow the forest tracks. One delightful example is the walk from Dafnoussa to the Venetian Fort, or to the clearing above the Fort. There are also some very pleasant walks of varying length along the banks of the River Kereus, beneath the plane-trees.

The road which starts to the north of the village of Prokopi crosses the Katakalous stream and passes above

the village of Drazi (Dafnoussa); it then bears south-east and descends towards Prokopi, crossing several streams (the Vlachiotikorema, the Dichaloremata and the Xerorema) on its way. It would be an ideal road for touring around the Kandili area by car provided it were gravelled and later asphalted, since its present condition makes it virtually impassable at some points because of mud and potholes. There are several interesting stopping-points along the road:

- the Katakalous stream, which has running water and plane-trees along its banks: here a small recreation area with benches, etc., could be provided.
- just above the village of Drazi (Dafnoussa), where there are some attractive meadows suitable for walks and picnics alongside a few traditional cultivations such as vineyards, cornfields, horticulture, etc.
- to the south of Drazi at the little spring known as "Pyrgaki" which is an excellent place to stop and rest and drink water.
- at the point where the road branches (the right-hand fork leading to the Venetian Fort), there are some beautiful meadows and deserted fields where the natural hedges of Judas trees and hawthorn, along with other bushes and trees, still survive.

It is a wonderful area for walks and recreation.

Approximately 500 metres further along the road, travelling eastwards, there is a very tall pine on the left-hand side (*pinus halepensis*), whose trunk measures about 80 cms. in diameter. Nearby is another pine which was struck by lightning and burnt.

Further along the road forks off to the right, leading to the fire-watch tower. There is a path near here which leads to some attractive meadows with running streams, and also a spring and some large plane-trees (Point K). This area can only be reached on foot. The road continues past a goat-pen and then climbs and winds its way up through superb forest towards the Vlachiotiko stream, eventually arriving at a spot where a small spring rises in the gully (Point N). In this area there are some beautiful meadows suitable for picnic sites. There is also a large oak-tree (*quercus pubescens*) whose trunk is approximately one metre in diameter; considering the slow growth of this species, the tree must be at least 300 years old. The road up to Prokopi crosses the bed of the Xerorema, a dried-up water course (as its Greek name implies), which is covered over by plane-trees. Almost all the above route passes through a forest of Aleppo pine (*pinus halepensis*), although at the higher points there are also stands of fir (*abies cephalonica*) and black pine (*pinus nigra*), with plane-trees (*platanus orientalis*) alongside the streams. The tour takes about two hours by car, but if one were to stop at the stopping-places suggested above, it could be reckoned as a half-day trip. Somewhere on this road, a secondary road branches off. At present this is virtually impassable by private car, and only a jeep can get through because of the water and mud covering the track at certain points. The track, could be gravelled as far as the fire-watch tower, from where there is a splendid view of the whole of the Prokopi valley. The remaining section, which follows a circular route through a superb forest of *pinus halepensis*, *pinus nigra* and *abies cephalonica*, could be left in its present state and be used only for walking.

On the way up to the fire-watch tower there are some very old pines (*pinus halepensis*), and a little higher up some impressive stands of black pine (*pinus nigra*). Continuing along the forest ringroad past the fork off to the fire-watch tower, the walker comes across a tall pine (*pinus halepensis*) with thick foliage and a trunk with a large girth.

Further along the ringroad at Koromilia, its highest point, the walker encounters a mountain path which leads up to the peak area. Today the path has almost disappeared through lack of use, but it could in the future be signposted and turned into a pole of attraction for walkers and mountaineers and even those of attraction for walkers and mountaineers and even those nature-lovers who wish simply to enjoy the truly magical view from the Kandili peaks. Reaching the pass between the Kourvelo and Drakotourla peaks approximately two hours later, the walker sees below him the northern part of the Gulf of Evvia, with the mountains of Central Greece beyond. A refreshment kiosk should be provided at this point of for picnickers.

Another pleasant excursion, by car or on foot, can be made towards Lagouvouni and the Venetian Fort. Near here is a spring known as "Zison Vrisi", which is an excellent spot for picnics.

There is another interesting spot worth visiting, which is outside the Prokopi estate. It is to be found on the edge of the mines beyond the village of Troupi, and features small rivers and waterfalls which tumble from an area of plane-trees at the base of the peak of Mount Kandili.

The area to the west of Prokopi village, where a great variety of bushes and shrubs and other plants of the Mediterranean maquis grow, is suitable for the creation of a path taking a circular route which would last about one to one and a half hours, for the people who wish to go for only a short walk, mainly in the spring and autumn.

Those walkers who seek a longer route can follow the fire-break belt which starts above the village of Prokopi, then traverse the slopes of Mount Gourtzorachis and eventually emerge on to the road near point (N), to return to the village. This walk takes about three hours. The walk could be extended by continuing further along the road and following the path to point (K), then returning to the road and Prokopi. This walk takes about five hours. It takes two hours to climb to Koromilia from point (K), and one and a half to return.

The various routes which can be taken by walkers from the village of Prokopi to the pass between the peaks can be summed up as follows:

Prokopi - Point (N),
via Gourtzorachi : approx. 1 hour 45 mins.
Point (N) - Point (K) : approx. 1 hour 15 mins.
Point (K) - Koromilia : approx. 2 hours.
Koromilia - Pass : approx. 2 hours.

It takes a total of approximately seven hours to reach the peaks from Prokopi, and about five hours for the return journey. Naturally the route should be well signposted in accordance with international standards governing the signposting of footpaths.

The above route allows the journey to be broken up into several sections, or certain sections may be missed out altogether. For example, instead of starting out by car from the village, the traveller could go straight to a spot near point (K) and continue from there on foot. It is also possible to go by car as far up as the fire-watch tower or even further, to Koromilia.

At a future date, a refreshment bar could be provided for visitors to the fire-watch tower. The area above Koromilia should remain untouched and far away from roads and vehicles, and should be accessible only on foot.

The mines

The area's three mines (at Gerorema, Paraskevorema and Troupi) would make ideal locations for geological, botanical and ecological study; for example, there are places where seams of magnesite are clearly apparent in the serpentine. At others, the establishment of serpentinophilous plants (alyssum sp. peltaria emarginata, etc.) on the heaps of excavated aggregate may be observed. The creation of small lakes and marshy areas, and the existence of self-sown pines and plane-trees on the heaps of rubble are also interesting features to be observed.

Of the three mines, the one which lends itself most readily for observation and study is that at Gerorema, where open-cast mining has been discontinued. Here the following are to be observed:

- a) Areas with magnesite seams on the site of old open-cast mines.
- b) The galleries in use today.
- c) A lake used for rinsing the rocks, which has now begun to take on a natural appearance with the growth of aquatic vegetation along its edges.
- d) Natural regeneration of the pine forest and other vegetation on the heaps of old aggregate excavated from the mines.

APPENDIX V: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PARTICULARS

General Picture

* Passing the Kleisoura and some small defiles, we found ourselves coming to the richly wooded lowlands of Ahmet Aga, the surrounding high pine forests, terminating towards the sea in the promontory of Kandili.

After another short rest indulged in to get respite from the intensive heat of the day.- every spot of shade was now of value- we entered the most beautiful park-like scenery, highly timbered on every side, where about two hours from Ahmet Aga, Mr. Noel's property commences. ...

About three, we came in front of the village twinkling between deep foliage - and Mr. Noel's house amidst, for size pre-eminent. But what attracted us still more was a gay group in full dance, under an immense plane tree, round which they circled". Wyse, Th., Impressions of Greece etc., London 1871.

From the time Wyse wrote his impressions, the changes in the mode of life as well as in the natural landscape are quite important, although the basic traits described remain still unchanged.

Right at the entrance to the basin at Derveni, the mines of Gerorema extending on the right bank of Kereus river affect the aesthetic purity of the scenery.

The same picture is offered to the visitor right after Prokopi on the road to Mantoudi. The "immense plane tree" around which people used to dance according to Wyse's description is still there but is almost entirely hidden behind huge piles of debris descending down to the edge of the plane-tree forest from the Paraskevorema mines above.

On the other bank of the river, higher up the slopes of mount Kandili, near the small settlement of Troupi, extensive surface mining has inflicted serious injuries upon the environment. The industrial character of the area is prominent and the settlements of Prokopi and Mantoudi have little to offer from the aesthetic point of view.

The former picturesque stone houses have given way to new apartments of poor technical quality. The pattern of the settlements is most anarchic and it is obvious that the proprietors have tried to build every inch available on their plots.

Nevertheless, Prokopi and Mantoudi give the impression of thriving communities. Aesthetics left aside, one can observe an intense construction activity which produces ugly but comfortable housing equipped with the most modern facilities and appliances. Noticeable also is the big number of middle class automobiles and the large number of tavernas and restaurants, most of them working the year round and not just during the tourist season. During the summer months, Prokopi is a stop-over point for the heavy tourist traffic towards the sea-side resorts of Northern Evvia.

Prokopi, though, attracts also a quite different stream of tourists: the pious pilgrims to Osios Ioannis o Rossos, the local saint of Prokopi (Urgrup) in Asia Minor, from where the majority of the inhabitants of today's Prokopi originate (see also chapter 5: "Historical background"). The corresponding church, in the middle of the village and the nearby modern hostel for the accommodation of the pilgrims seem overlarge by local standards.

Historical background

A basic working hypothesis of the study is that present attitudes are in large part products of past historical experiences. Further more, it is suggested that situations today are perceived to a great extent in terms coined to describe events which stirred society a long time ago.

This is especially true, in our opinion, for the study area, dominated by the Noel-Baker estate, one of the

largest privately-owned stretches of forest and land in Greece, the property of the Noel-Baker family ever since the dawn of Greek Independence one and a half centuries ago.

The continuous ownership of the estate by one and the same family for such a long span of time is exceptional in modern Greece, where frequent and radical social restructurings have been the norm.

The fact that the owners of the estate belong to the English nobility is more than a peripheral peculiarity: it completes the picture of "tsiflikas", the big landowner who replaced Turkish rule over the peasants after Independence, with the hated characteristics attributed to representatives of British imperialism in the framework of a certain political outlook widely shared among the Greek Left.

Furthermore, one should note that northern Evvia, to which the study area belongs, has been an important theatre for the two major historical events which shook Greek society in the more recent past.

- a) The influx of the wretched crowds of refugees from Asia Minor and the Black Sea coast in 1922, after the defeat of the Greek Army by the troops of Kemal Ataturk on the Anatolian plains.
- b) The occupation of the country by the Axis forces during the Second World War, followed by the atrocious Civil War between the royalist-conservative government forces and the partisans of the predominately communist Greek Democratic Army.

The first event, the arrival of the refugees, scores of whom settled in northern Evvia and notably on the Noel-Baker estate itself, produced two major structural changes:

- a) One of the most radical land reforms in Europe --with the exception of the Soviet Union-- accompanied by large-scale expropriations and distribution of land, not only to the refugees but also to the previously landless peasants.
- b) The cultural conflict between the largely conservative and traditionalist "Hellenic" population and the new-comers, who formed the basis of a new enhanced working and professional class which played a crucial role in Greece's economic take-off and modernization.

On the other hand, the Civil War of 1944-1949 divided Greek society along new lines --a division not yet fully overcome. Especially in rural Greece persecution of the defeated communists continued uninterrupted until the fall of the seven-year military dictatorship in 1974-- the last episode of this dramatic post-war period. Paradoxically, the dictatorship did not add major new cleavages in Greek society, but rather helped to bridge the old ones. The recurrence of old stereotypes during the social conflict around the Noel-Baker estate shows that the social veneer is rather thin and that the prevailing new pragmatic attitude is precarious. In the following discussion we shall try to outline the conflict in the light of the historical background described above, beginning with a brief sketch of the history of the estate itself.

Sites of Historical Importance

Ancient times

Little is known of the ancient history of northern Evvia. It is first mentioned in the *Odyssey*, when Homer alludes to the town of Kerynthos by the sea near the estuary of the river Boudoros. In the *Iliad*, too, there is a reference to the town of Aigai where Poseidon had his palace "in the depths of the eternal and sparkling sea".

Strabo, the ancient geographer, locates Aigai on the promontory of mount Makistos (Kandili) on the sea near Elymnon (Limni) and Orobiai (Rovies). There, Strabo claims, once stood a forest dedicated to Hercules near the place today called Araklia.

According to some beliefs, the temple of Poseidon occupied the site of the present monastery of Agios Nicolas Galataki; a saint revered by the Orthodox as a protector of seafaring men.

Franks, Venetians, and Turks

Visible remains of the Franko-Venetian occupation of Evvia, which lasted from 1204 to 1470 when the Turks took over the island, are the numerous castles and watch-towers placed strategically along all the main routes.

The greater study area was part of the Terzero della Clissura, one of the three fiefs into which Evvia was divided during the 14th and the 15th centuries. The other two were Terzero del Rio in the north, and Terzero di Caristo in the south; the rest of the territory being the Venetian colony of Negroponte (Chalkis). Politically and economically the whole island had come under the influence of Venice as early as 1082 after the contract signed with Alexios I, which conceded Venice full freedom of trade in many parts of the Byzantine Empire.

The name of the fief was derived from the fortified gorge of Kleisoura which marked its southern limits. The ruins of the castle, 6 km to the south-west of Prokopi, dominated the pass and was one of the strongest fortifications of the island. The most accurate description of the castle and its surroundings is attributed to Buchon (1845). The popular name of the castle is Sideroporta, meaning Iron Gate.

The other stronghold of the area was the castle of Mandugo (Mantoudi) on a hill to the south of the village on the right bank of the Kereus River, but almost nothing is left of it today.

The castle of Mantoudi was in direct visual communication with a system of watchtowers which controlled the route to the harbour of Limni to the west, to the protected bays of Mantoudi and Peleki to the east, and to the castle of Agia Anna to the north.

Two of those watch-towers on the road to Limni may still be seen near the villages of Pharakla and Zoodochos Pigi (Tsuka). Another tower, situated on the right bank of the Boudoros, controlled the route to the bay.

An important link between Kleisoura and Mantoudi was the Beza Pyrgos tower at an altitude of 500 m near the village of Dafnoussa. This tower permitted observation of the Kereus valley below, the plain of Mantoudi, and the sea as far north as Mt. Athos.

On the other side of mount Kandili facing the mainland is the monastery of Agios Nikolaos Galataki, which has a Venetian watch-tower integrated into the fortification wall of the early Turkish period. The forest belonging to the monastery has common boundaries with the Noel-Baker estate.

The Turkish occupation of Evvia has left almost no traces in this part of the island which was completely neglected. Turkish rule was effected through a garrison based in Chalkis. What is today the village of Prokopi consisted then of a tiny cluster of huts. Turkish authority manifested itself only in tax collection.

The Monastery of St. Nikolaos Galataki

The Galataki manastery is located on the site of an ancient temple of Poseidon. According to the testimony of the Patriarch Cyril the Fifth, in a document no longer extant, the manastery was erected in the seventh or eighth century. After the occupation of Evvia by the Turks (1470) it was destroyed, to be reconstructed at a later date --as tradition has it-- by a rich shipbuilder who lived in the Galata district of Constantinople (whence the name Galataki).

The interior walls of the manastery church were once covered with murals, but these were at a later period plastered over. The "great tower" of the manastery is one noteworthy feature. It was built for purposes of defence during a time of pirate raids. The monks secured their portable property inside the tower and managed to defend themselves successfully from thieves and pirates. When on the initiative of local Ottoman officials a demolition order was issued, the abbot journeyed to Constantinople, where he persuaded Selim Khan, the son of the Sultan Suleiman, to issue a special firman safeguarding the tower from destruction. Through different historical periods, at the hands of Turks, pirates and other thieves, the manastery has

undergone many tribulations, the greatest of which date from 1752. It has also suffered from the rapacity of many Christians, including bishops, who have appropriated parts of its estates and dependencies.

The Galataki monastery is nowadays linked by forest roads to Kakavo, Troupi and Dafnoussa, but they are in very bad condition and are dangerous at many points because of transverse incisions made to shape the road surface. There is also a path leading from Troupi to Galataki (three hours' walk) but it is impassable in winter. The road from Limni to Galataki also presents considerable difficulties.

Ossios Ioannis o Rossos

According to the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, St. John the Russian fought against the Turks during the Russo-Turkish War and was arrested by his enemies in 1711. As a prisoner of war he attracted great respect through the calm endurance he displayed until his death in 1730. Tradition has it that in 1733 his remains were found to be unaffected by decomposition, and as a result he was proclaimed to be a saint. From 1733 to 1824 his relics were in the possession of the Metropolitan of Caesarea in Cappadocia and in 1824 they passed under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Chalkis, Istiaia and the Northern Sporades.

The relics of Osios Ioannis o Rossos are exhibited at Prokopi and are an object of worship for about 300,000 pilgrims annually. The foundation of the same name which functions as trustee for the church of St. John is a legal entity under civil law governed by its own administrative statutes. The foundation is headed by a five-member governing board under the chairmanship of the Metropolitan of Chalkis. The board comprises one attorney, one economist, one member of Prokopi's village council and one churchman from Evvia. This body is responsible for the management of church incomes and engages in charitable works which include the creation to date of two orphanages, two old people's homes, one student hostel, eight hundred places in children's camps in Rovies in northern Evvia, the payment of medical expenses for patients undergoing treatment abroad, etc.

Neither the interior nor the exterior of the church of St. John are of any particular aesthetic quality. The only points of interest in the interior are perhaps some icons which exemplify the style of Cappadocian ecclesiastical art. There are also oil-lamps of forged silver, again Cappadocian in style, as well as two alabaster lions from an episcopal throne.

The presence of the relics of Osios Ioannis o Rossos could certainly constitute a point of interest to the extent that they could be combined with other features of the nature park. It is worth pointing out that the folk art market, which at present consists of a small number of shops concentrated around the church, could serve as the nucleus for further construction of traditional edifices selling handmade wooden articles, textiles, dye-stuffs, etc. At present the articles on sale to pilgrims are of low quality and low value.

Social origins of the dispute over the estate

The limits of the early Greek State emerging in the aftermath of a devastating nine-year armed struggle were defined by the so-called Protocol of London of 24 January/3 February 1830 signed by the Great Powers of the time: England, France, and Russia.

The boundaries extended from the estuaries of the rivers Achelooos in the west and Spercheios in the east, and included Evvia, the Northern Sporades, Skyros and the Cyclades with the island of Amorgos.

According to the same Protocol, the Turks, still occupying Evvia and Attica, were given one year to withdraw, on the assurance that they would obtain compensation for their landed property.

Due to the penury of the Greek State, this policy could not be realized. Capodistrias, then 'Governor' of Greece, appealed to rich Greeks of the diaspora and Philhellenes to come and buy up the Turkish properties.

The appeal was readily answered by a number of wealthy Greeks and foreigners who came to Evvia and

bought the land from the departing Turks.

Among the foreigners who bought Turkish estates was Edward Noel, a relative of Lord Byron, who in 1832 acquired part of today's Noel-Baker estate. The part near the village of Drazi was bought by another Englishman, Charles Holt Bracebridge and was added later to the estate.

However, the final assimilation of Evvia with Greece did not occur until March 1833 when King Otho was enthroned by the Great Powers after the assassination of Capodistrias.

The property rights of the forest included in the Noel-Baker estate, originally confirmed by Hadji Ismael Bey, the representative of the Turkish government for transactions concerning Turkish properties in Evvia and Attica, were disputed by King Otho's government, and finally recognized by the ad hoc Commission on the Sale of Turkish Properties in 1837.

The philhellenes and the educationalists

Edward Noel belonged to the declining British aristocracy of the nineteenth century, which was threatened by the acquisitive materialistic middle classes and confronted with the misery of the impoverished proletarian masses and the ugliness produced by industrial civilization.

His arrival in Greece in 1832, in the company of his friends and former schoolmates Muller and de Fellenberg, had little to do with the ideological current represented by "philhellenism" which had inspired his relative Lord Byron years before.

The cruel realities of the Revolution and the new state had left no room for the romantic ideology which moved the previous generation, whose enlightened liberalism was frustrated by the absolutist-conservative social order established by the Vienna Congress of 1814 all over Europe. For the young philhellenes, the Greek Revolution was a sign of hope and a promise of a different utopian world emerging in the glory of the revived ancient Spirit.

Noel's motives should be rather sought in another movement of the time, probably not less utopian, but certainly much more conservative: the "educationalist" movement of the Pestalozzi school.

He came to Greece knowing little about the country, but with ambitious educationalist projects in his mind inspired by his own school experiences. As a young boy he was sent to be educated at Hofwyl, a famous agricultural school near Geneva, attended by aristocratic young men from all over the world. There he met and became close friends with his future partners Muller, and de Fellenberg, who was the son of the founder and director of the school --an enthusiastic Pestalozzi disciple himself.

Hofwyl's Pestalozzian educational principles were based upon an enlightened but nevertheless conservative outlook which centred upon the dignity of manual agricultural labour. Agriculture, therefore, not industry, should be the condition of a decent life and all science and reason should be used for improving agriculture, and thus, human existence.

De Fellenberg school was at the same time a model self-sustaining farm with the pupils doing all the manual work.

This closed and authoritarian environment was intended to serve as a prototype for the creation of a network of similar schools which would help change society by education and hard work. De Fellenberg, who believed that society's real wealth relied upon its well educated and hard working citizens, remained all his life an apostle of generalized state sponsored education.

Nevertheless, de Fellenberg was not a revolutionary. Hofwyl's microcosm consisted of two unequal institutions united within the same schoolyard: The school of the poor and "Great House", the school for the upper classes. The two social extremes --the middle classes were not represented in Hofwyl's spartan phalanstery-- coexisted without much contact between them. Social stratification was according to de

Fellenberg, part of God's plan for social harmony. Every man should keep his position and acquire dignity only through moral development and hard work.

The relevance of these ideas to the new Greek State is that Capodistrias, the first Governor of Greece, shared them whole-heartedly and was himself active in the founding of orphanages and agricultural schools.

Capodistrias not only knew about Hofwyl, but during his frequent trips to Switzerland, he paid extended visits to the school. Later, he even wanted to create a Greek department there for the education of future teachers, but this project was never realized.

It is therefore probable that Edward Noel's plans were known to the Governor and favoured by him. Capodistrias' assassination, young de Fellenberg's death from malaria on Evvia, and difficulties with the peasants finally frustrated Noel's plans.

What remained, however, was his 'educationalist' and patriarchal-philanthropic attitude which was met with incomprehension by the suspicious peasants.

For them, manual work was a curse and agriculture a mere necessity. They had little regard for education and changing their traditional ways.

Being used to life under Turkish rule administered from distant Chalkis, they could not comprehend either Noel's presence on the estate, or his personal interference in their agricultural tasks.

"The peasant is left to grope for himself. The proprietor lives in Athens or Chalkis; the capitalist in Constantinople, Vienna or London". (Wyse, 1871). This is the way an English visitor to the estate in 1871 describes the conduct of the Greek proprietors of the neighbouring estates who succeeded the Turks.

Long-term investment, especially in the forest, which was considered to be common property like water or air, seemed an absurdity to the peasants.

"Very little value is set on wood, and the forests continue to suffer. All conspire, from goats to forest guards, against them, as the only remedy for the preservation of the timber; to nearly double them, but their salary not being raised, nor their capacity improved, it is only adding to the plunders and extending the plunder. Mr. Noel watches, and to a certain degree protects: not so his neighbouring proprietors. He complains bitterly of an Hegoumenos of the convent of the Taxiarch, near Kandili. He is cutting down without mercy. He hires out the cutting on the Turkish principle, at ten drachmas a hatchet per month, and leaves them free choice in certain prescribed quarters. Mr. Noel expostulated with no purpose. The good abbot, a shrewd man in his affairs, said composedly, "What matter? How am I to get money otherwise? My successors will take care of themselves; and he goes on cutting, so that the noble mountain, once covered with forest, is now nearly bare" (Wyse, 1871).

This description of the attitudes, given by the same Sir Thomas Wyse in 1871, illustrates clearly the nature of the conflict between two different and incompatible value systems and time perspectives.

Edward Noel, as did his compatriot Wyse and many other visitors to the estate, despaired over the cyclothymic peasants "under the sway of a creed which turns half the days of the year into festivals and deprives them of sufficient nourishment the other half" (Taylor, p. 254).

Conversely, his Protestant attitude to life, governed by the Calvinist motto "l'homme propose et Dieu dispose", a phrase he often used in his letters to Lady Byron (unpublished) after an enthusiastic description of a new project he had in mind, must also have been completely unintelligible to the peasants.

They expected completely different behaviour from a landlord and certainly they were perplexed by the fact that he was not "keeping his position" by doing dirty agricultural work - a "low" occupation - while he remained superior to them all the same. "It was difficult for the Greek peasants, after so many years of

Turkish rule, to understand how the new owners made themselves their equal, by their work, and setting themselves the example before asking it from others' is the explanation given by Alexandre Fachon who visited the estate 1841 (Buchon, 1845).

This original conflict remains in essence still unresolved. The stereotypes developed on both sides out of the inherent incomprehension have apparently remained unaltered up to the present, and seem to underlie every conflict between the proprietors of the estate and the local population.

In the same context it must be noted that there is also a strong tendency to reject the paternalistic imposition of technical and social improvements by the rural population in Greece.

The reasons are twofold: Firstly, the rural societies had a very long tradition of "self-government", the Turkish authorities appearing only in the form of tax collectors and punitive force. Traditionally thinking people could not perceive the modern Greek State in terms very different to those in which they viewed Ottoman rule. On the other hand, transition to modern forms of thought and behaviour is always preceded by social sedition and dissent. It was never imposed successfully by the state, let alone by a benevolent person or institution. Change of attitudes has thus been a product of an adaptation strategy to changing reality on an individualistic personal basis. Not being the result of change in the global philosophical outlook, "modernity" often remains only partial.

The paternalistic benevolent attitude of the owners of the Noel-Baker estate continuously exhibited by the Noel-Baker family has led to a profound antipathy on the part of the local population, a fact recognized by Mr. Noel-Baker himself, who epitomised it in the following anecdote :

"After an abortive attempt against the Sultan, a suspect was brought before him, so that he would recognize whether he were the author of the crime. Looking upon him carefully, the Sultan spoke: Take him away and let him go. He could not possibly have tried to kill me. I do not remember having ever done him any favour."

Historical background to the land ownership controversy

The history of the Noel-Baker estate after 1837 evolves along the line of a perpetual conflict between its British owners on the one hand and the local population and the state authorities on the other.

Schematically, one can divide the estate's history into four distinct phases:

- The "pioneering" phase, from 1837, when the ownership was formally recognized, to E. Noel's death in 1889.
- The "consolidation" phase, from 1889 to the arrival of the Cappadocian refugees in 1923.
- The "expropriation" phase, from 1923 to the restoration of democracy in 1974 after seven years of dictatorship.
- The "open conflict" phase, from 1974 onwards.

The "pioneering" phase, 1837-1889.

After ownership of the forest was settled, a period of pioneering began; during which the estate was organized and the basic infrastructure developed.

In 1838, E. Noel married Frances Isabelle Doyle, who came to live with him in Ahmet Aga. A year later, E. Noel bought from C.H. Bracebridge the estate around Drazi and incorporated it into Ahmet Aga.

In 1841, Carl Muller, an old school-mate became his partner buying half of the unified estate. C. Muller arrived and settled with his wife in Ahmet Aga. The two families moved into the new house built on the estate. Together they organized the exploitation of the forest and created the necessary infrastructure. At the same time, they took measures for the proper drainage of the fields and constructed stone houses for the peasants, a school, and a church.

The main difficulty they encountered was the unwillingness of the local people to participate in these development projects - not even in the digging of the drainage channels for the fields nor in the building of their own houses.

Labourers working for a salary had to be imported from other places. Most of the workers were Albanians, much valued by E. Noel as an austere, hard working and well disciplined race of people. Feudal relations were however maintained with the local peasants who had to deliver half of their produce to their masters.

The discontent culminated in 1870 in the accusation and trial of his son Frank charged with complicity with bandits who had kidnapped and murdered a group of diplomats, two of whom were British.

A year later the Criminal Court acquitted F. Noel of the complicity charge. A notable element of the persecution was the fact that the bandits, of Albanian origin themselves, had relatives and acquaintances among the despised Albanian labourers on the estate.

It seems that it had been a policy of the estate to employ members of ethnic minorities. Besides the Albanian labourers, Sarakatsan and Vlach shepherds were encouraged to settle there.

Descendants of these ethnic groups live today in Prokopi apparently well integrated with the rest of the population, but still conscious of their origins.

Three years before, E. Noel's death in 1889, the estate reached its maximal extension by the incorporation of 9,000 ha of forest, pasture and cultivated land at Farakla belonging to the Greek shipowners Giourdis and Tombazis from Hydra, and by the purchase of the part belonging to C. Muller who died in 1884.

The "consolidation" phase, 1889 -1923.

Following the death of E. Noel in 1889, the estate passed to his son Frank, born in 1845, and married in 1886 to Edith-Helen Werner.

The first act of F. Noel, after his father's death, was to sell the property rights to the magnesite and other ore deposits to "Α.Ε. Δημοσίων και Ιδιωτικών Επιχειρήσεων", a forerunner of the Skalistiris Group. This and the subsequent sale of 100 ha of forest to the same company mark the beginning of the industrial era for the region. Until then magnesite mining was done by small Greek and English companies on a non-industrial scale.

This phase of the history of the Noel-Baker estate may be considered as the most peaceful. Frank Noel apparently enjoyed a good reputation among the local population as a medical doctor. His daughter Irene, a volunteer nurse during the Balkan Wars and the First World War, was even decorated for her services to Greece.

In 1915 Frank's daughter Irene married Philip Baker, and added his surname to hers. The family name became Noel-Baker henceforth.

In 1919, Franc Noel died and the estate passed to his daughter Irene who took Ahmet Aga and half of Drazi and his son Byron who took Farakla and half of Drazi.

A year later, Francis Noel-Baker was born.

The "expropriation" phase, 1923-1974

In 1923 a year after the defeat of the Greek Army in Asia Minor, the first refugees arrived in Ahmet Aga. They originated from Prokopi (Urgup) in Cappadocia and belonged to the turcophone Greek Orthodox minority populations of Asia Minor. Their assimilation of the masses of refugees would have been impossible without radical land reform involving the expropriation of the large estates. Although Ahmet Aga was exempted from

these expropriations as a sign of recognition by the Greek government of Irene Noel-Baker's humanitarian engagement during the Balkan Wars, she refused this privileged treatment. Thus, in 1926, 1,495 ha. of cultivated land were expropriated for distribution among the refugees and the landless local peasants. The expropriation was not completed until 1955, when 518.8 ha. were granted to the local farmers. A year later, Irene Noel-Baker died and the ownership of the estate passed to her son Francis. Nevertheless, the ownership of the plane tree forest in the Kereus valley as well as of the river bed was still under dispute until a decree of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1961 confirmed it.

During the Second World War, the estate was occupied by the Italian army. The Noel-Bakers were obliged to seek refuge in England. Various resistance groups were active in the study area but no documentary evidence of their activities has been found. Oral testimonies from locals indicate that there was intense partisan activity -under the leadership of "Captain Analato"- during the civil war period as well and that at this time the estates of the "tsiflikas" had been divided up amongst the landless peasants. A large section of the Noel-Baker residence, including the library, was destroyed by an accidental fire in 1942. At the end of the Civil War there was a reversion to the previous status quo, the owners returned and the house was rebuilt on the original plan.

Philip Noel Baker and his son Francis were active in politics both during the Second World War and in the post-war period. Philip Noel-Baker, winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1959 for his efforts in disarmament, was a Labour member of Parliament from 1936 to 1961. He participated both in the war-time Churchill government from 1942 to 1945 and in the post-war Labour government 1945-1951.

His son Francis was also a member of Parliament for the Labour Party during the same period. This period, however, coincided with the Greek Civil War (1944-1949) in which England played a direct and extremely controversial role. Taking also into account the subsequent Cyprus crisis and tensions between England and Greece, it becomes evident why the Noel-Bakers were rejected both by the communist and the non-communist "Left". This "Left", a term applied by the authorities to characterize all those who were not actively collaborating with the right-wing post-war governments, is highly represented among the refugee and mining population of the broader region.

The benevolent activities of the "northern Euboean Foundation", created by Francis Noel-Baker for the purpose of improving living conditions in the region, did not ameliorate the picture: instead it contributed to the deepening of this "political" rejection, since it appeared to be the other face of the same oppressive policy. The continuation of these activities during the dictatorship gave them associated with a flavour of collaboration.

The "open conflict" phase, from 1974 onwards.

The fall of the dictatorial regime in 1974 after the Turkish occupation of half the territory of Cyprus and the general military mobilization which brought Greece to the brink of war with Turkey, liberated the most diverse social forces until then suppressed by the military, and gave rise to a profound questioning of Greek society. In this climate of generalized dissent, an obvious target was the Noel-Baker family and the Ahmet Aga estate.

In 1975, a protest movement developed in Prokopi and a society was created with the sole purpose of ousting the "English landowner ("tsiflikas") Baker" (The "Society of the 9th of May). The protest was not restricted to the local level, and soon became a major political issue. The government's reaction to the protest movement, which occasionally took violent forms (acts of sabotage, arson etc) was to declare the forest as "διακατεχόμενο", i.e. of disputed ownership and claimed by the state, based on a decision issued by the Ministry of Agriculture on 14.8.1975.

On 7.5.1976 citing this decision and the tensions in the relations between the inhabitants of Prokopi and F. Noel-Baker, the Prefecture of Chalkis, declared the management plan invalid, thus prohibiting the exploitation of the forest. This verdict has since been repeatedly extended and therefore all work in the forest has stopped. The form and intensity of the conflict involving the Noel-Baker estate, especially during its last phase, were a direct product of the cultural and political climate prevailing during this period.

Third-world ideologies, common among young intellectuals during the early '70's, became a predominant ideological framework endorsed by the massive social movement which characterized the period after the fall of the dictatorship.

A common element of all these ideologies was their tendency to transfer all responsibility for the military dictatorship, the distorted economic development, the military coup, the failure of the Greek army in Cyprus and every conceivable misadventures of Greek society to the abstract enemy "imperialism" and the action of its foreign agents.

The current political and economic analyses of the time, influenced by "dependency", "unequal exchange" and "radical" theories became the backbone of the ideology of the rapidly growing socialist movement and were also shared by the vast majority of the then thriving "leftists". These newly imported ideologies merged with traditional communist views, according to which Greece was a semi-feudal society dominated by "imperialism", and the wave of "populism" steered mainly by the press.

Noel-Baker, the foreign "latifundist", the politician in the service of the British government during the Greek Civil War, the friend of the royal family and interlocutor of the military junta was a unique example fitting perfectly into the described theoretical frame, otherwise quite alien to Greek social reality, especially as far as rural society is concerned: After the repeated expropriations of estates over only 25 ha. there was hardly any "latifundist" to be found, the main problem of agriculture being rather the very small size of the family owned plots.

Local "historical" discontent and a social movement of "peasants" demanding land from the foreign landowner were, under the circumstances, a pure manifestation of the manichean struggle otherwise fought on the imaginary level of theory. At present, the tension is not apparent and third-world anti-imperialist theories do not stir any emotions. We have observed, however, that the stereotypes cultivated during the period of open struggle still prevail under the surface completely unaltered. This is true not only for the majority of the inhabitants of the region, but also for the majority of the professional and administrative elite. Even if the question does not stir any emotions outside the local area, the picture of the dubious British "tsiflikas" and of peasants struggling for their rights is still part of this political culture well beyond the political Left.