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# Crossing the Green Line: Anti-Settler Sentiment in Cyprus

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Adrienne Christiansen

*J*ust seconds from the main airport exit in Larnaca, Cyprus, a large new permanent sign greets thousands of daily tourists and visitors. It reads: WE DEMAND ALL TURKISH TROOPS AND SETTLERS LEAVE CYPRUS. Standing in stark contrast to the norms of hospitality for which the country is justly famous, the sign announces that all is not well on Aphrodite's island. Unfortunately, the airport message is no anomaly; rather, it is a harbinger of anti-immigrant sentiment that permeates Cyprus. An older, rusted but identical sign is located at another popular tourist site, the Ledra Palace checkpoint on the "Green Line" in downtown Lefkosia.<sup>1</sup>

Given their attempt to evoke attention and sympathy from tourists, the signs at the airport and the Green Line are comparatively mild in their insistence that Turkish immigrants, commonly referred to as "settlers," be expelled from Cyprus. Pejorative and inflammatory statements against this population frequently are printed in the Greek Cypriot press. Turkish immigrants commonly are described in newspaper reports or during informal conversation as dark, dirty, black beards, peasants, squatters, interlopers, illegal occupiers, criminals, rapists, thieves, drug-dealers, uneducated, poor, unclean, lazy, religious, gypsies, or even "Anatolian apes." Anti-immigrant sentiment was everywhere when I lived on the island during the fall of 2003.<sup>2</sup> Even the words "settler," "Turk," and "Muslim" served as vicious epithets. Regardless of whether I was on the north or south side of the Green Line, no one in my company flinched upon hearing a settler

slur. No one raised objections. No one apologized or muttered half-heartedly that, "I am no racist, but..."<sup>3</sup>

Originally, the animus reflected in the anti-Turkish-immigrant talk surprised and disturbed me because of its hostile tenor and ubiquity. I was accustomed to Americans who try to rhetorically "soften the blow" of their racial epithets by denying their bigotry or racial intent. Additionally, anti-racist sensibilities and sensitivities in the United States have been heightened sufficiently so that racist discourse can produce outrage and protest, followed by apologies, heart-felt or not. Racism in the United States is still widespread, but racial *talk* is increasingly policed. Not so in Cyprus.

Over time, I became less surprised by the anti-settler slurs, though no less discomforted. As I turned my attention to these denigrating discourse practices, I discovered that Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike have very good reasons to vigorously oppose the policies that have brought between 50,000 and 120,000 mainland Turks to Cyprus in the wake of the island's *de facto* partition in 1974.<sup>4</sup> These immigration policies have heightened tensions and prompted political, social, and economic dislocations that, even in the best of circumstances, would challenge most societies. The conflict over Turkish settlers in northern Cyprus is especially potent because it adds highly emotional issues to an already tense situation, including human rights violations, refugees' agony, resentments about property losses, anger and humiliation over military losses, fears of electoral manipulation, anxieties about cultural and demographic displacement, and anger over the perceived "Turkification" of northern Cyprus.

Expressing opposition to a *policy* and its effects too frequently involves denigrating a *people*—a practice not limited to Cyprus. The slurs against Turkish settlers discomforted me in part because they so strongly reminded me of the language Americans use to insult both African-Americans and immigrants in the United States. My original research project was to analyze the rhetoric of Cyprus' Greek/Turkish ethno-nationalist conflict as reflected in political statuary and monuments. But even though I had gone abroad to learn about political language practices in a culture that was not my own, I found myself unable to ignore slurs against Turkish immigrants, nor their similarity to American racial epithets.

Pursuing this project on "anti-settler talk" generates numerous troubling questions and raises ethical dilemmas for me as a scholar new to international research. For example, does drawing attention to one

of the lesser-known schisms in Cyprus subtly suggest that I believe Americans are better than Cypriots in dealing with ethnic and/or racial conflicts? After having accepted the warm hospitality of my Cypriot hosts for many months, is it unconscionably rude of me to write about the derogatory depiction of Turkish settlers in the press and in everyday talk? Is it possible for me to write about the fascinating rhetorical and discursive components of the settler issue without seeming to make a moral judgment against people for whom I care deeply? And how should I handle the pressures put on me to publicly denounce the Turkish military and the Turkish government that sent the immigrants to the island in the first place? Can anything I write about this topic possibly be read as scholarship rather than an articulation of my supposedly “pro-Turkey” bias? After all, merely having attended Macalester’s Faculty Development International Seminar in Istanbul and expressing interest in the humanitarian plight of Turkish settlers has already led to angry and painful denunciations of me by Greek Cypriot friends. Lastly, I wonder whether publishing this essay will destroy any hope of ever doing research on Cyprus in the future.

Unattractive and difficult as it is to discuss, anti-settler sentiment in Cyprus is significant for reasons that both include and go beyond moral and humanitarian considerations. What appears on its face to be “simple” racist speech is considerably more complex. The anti-settler slurs symbolically capture important political issues on Cyprus. In particular, the sign outside the Larnaca airport succinctly articulates two of the *most entrenched barriers* to diplomatic reunification efforts on the island.<sup>5</sup> The sign also provides a glimpse into simmering demographic and multicultural politics that divide the island, demographics that extend beyond the more familiar conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Perhaps most importantly, the pejorative discourse about Turkish settlers *cannot* be dismissed as a case of historic hatreds or cross-ethnic animosities, for slurs against Turkish immigrants are echoed on *both* sides of the island. That is, *Greek* Cypriots talk about the settlers in ways nearly identical to how *Turkish* Cypriots talk about Turkish settlers. Signs demanding that Turkish troops and settlers leave the island might easily be found at Ercan Airport in the north were it not for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ (TRNC) oppressive squelching of dissent and critique of its policies, combined with terrorist threats from fascist groups like the notorious “Grey Wolves.”<sup>6</sup> As such, the racist slurs against Turkish settlers confound easy notions of identity politics and underscore the reality that racist speech is often

not about race, but also (or instead) reflects fears—of difference, or political, social, and economic changes.

In this essay, I briefly examine Cyprus' modern history and the political policies that led to large numbers of Turkish immigrants moving to the island in order to draw attention to an important aspect of the "Cyprus problem" that frequently goes unnoticed because it is overshadowed by the more familiar ethno-nationalist conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.<sup>7</sup> Anti-settler talk in Cyprus reminds us that discriminatory social and political practices almost always occur in an environment that is also rich in linguistic derogation and scapegoating. In this case, the discursive "Green Line" between Greeks and Turks has disappeared, thus creating space for unusually rare common ground. Unfortunately, that shared discursive space comes at the expense of desperately poor and underprivileged Turkish immigrants who are caught in their own version of "no man's land."

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To better understand the conditions leading to the wide array of slurs against Turkish settlers, one must first understand the historical and political exigencies that brought these immigrants to the island in the first place. The historical record demonstrates definitively that "others" have been coming to, and settling in, Cyprus for thousands of years. In this sense, the Turkish settler issue must be seen as a part of broader historical phenomena on the island. Due to its rich resources like copper and agricultural produce, as well as its geostrategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Cyprus has been attractive to a host of foreign conquerors with multiple invasions the result. According to political scientist Joseph Joseph, Cyprus "has been ruled by Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Ptolemies, Romans, Byzantines, Franks, Venetians, Ottoman Turks, and British."<sup>8</sup> Turkish control over northern Cyprus in the 1970s is only the most recent example of this historical pattern. Each of these conquerors brought administrators and immigrants and each left their distinctive marks on the island's politics, language, religion, architecture, art, and culture.

The Cyprus problem frequently is treated as a conflict between two homogenous, distinctive, and entirely antagonistic ethnic groups. But the contemporary wrangling over the island by British, Greek, and Turkish forces makes clear that the Cyprus problem is also a dispute over military and economic control by foreign powers that have inter-

vened in what they believe to be their own national interests.<sup>9</sup> To be sure, identity politics roil the island, but in ways that go far beyond the familiar ethno-nationalist conflict that typically draws the attention of scholars, diplomats, and reporters. Instead, I want to suggest that the struggle over the role of Turkish settlers reflects broad multicultural changes occurring all over the island.

Cyprus' ethnic makeup has taken on ever-increasingly diverse hues in the past several decades for reasons *entirely* separate from the issue of Turkish settlers in the north. Especially in light of its booming tourism industry, its serving as a place of refuge for people fleeing war or political upheaval, and its immigration policies on foreign workers, Cyprus has clearly entered a "multicultural age" with its concomitant pressures. For example, of the 2.5 million tourists who visit the island each year, more than half come from Great Britain and more than 30,000 Brits live permanently on the island as retired expatriates. Moreover, Cyprus has served as a place of refuge for Maronites, Armenians, Lebanese, and Russians, even though such groups frequently experience discrimination and believe themselves to be marginalized in Cypriot society. In addition, during the past two decades, Greek Cypriots have brought migrant construction and domestic workers by the tens of thousands from countries like Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.<sup>10</sup> In northern Cyprus, several hundred registered sex workers known as "konsomatrices" are imported from "Eastern European nations, primarily from Moldavia, Ukraine, Belarus and Romania."<sup>11</sup> Like foreign construction and domestic workers in the south, sex workers may not become citizens or even stay in the TRNC for more than six months. Thus, even if there were no Turkish settlers in the north, Cypriots would still be struggling with issues of enormous economic disparities on the island, nationalism, and how to maintain (or even define) their self-perceived "Cypriotness" during a time of increasing multicultural influences.<sup>12</sup> Cyprus' recent accession to the European Union and opening its borders to other Europeans will make these economic, identity, and multicultural pressures even more pronounced in the future.

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Who are the Turkish settlers who evoke widespread disparagement and why did they come to Cyprus? To answer these questions, one must recall several significant historical moments that led to the cata-

strophic events of 1974.<sup>13</sup> In the 1950s, Greek Cypriots, with the support of Greece and the Greek Orthodox Church, began a guerilla war against British authority in Cyprus. Independence from Britain was merely the first step in fulfilling the Greek Cypriot goal, which was *Enosis* or formal union with Greece. Turkish Cypriots feared that *Enosis* would lead to annihilation by their historic Greek enemies. Consequently, Turkish Cypriots advocated a policy of complete separation, known as *Taksim*. Britain manipulated ethnic tensions between Greeks and Turks on the island in order to blunt the Greek Cypriots' military success and to enlist the aid of Turkish Cypriots in the guerilla war. Greek Cypriots ultimately were successful in wresting control from Great Britain and won the country's independence, but they did not fulfill their final aim of *Enosis*. With no representation from the "motherlands" of Greece or Turkey, Britain designed and imposed a constitution that ultimately proved to be unworkable but that protected Great Britain's sovereign military bases and other geostrategic interests on the island. Greece, Turkey, and Great Britain signed a Treaty of Guarantee insuring the independence of Cyprus, its security, and its territorial integrity. In so doing, the newly independent Cyprus and the other international players agreed to relinquish pursuit of *Enosis* or *Taksim* policies.

Between 1963 and 1967, following a constitutional crisis in which the democratically elected President (and Greek Archbishop) Makarios suggested thirteen revisions that would limit Turkish Cypriot political power, separate municipalities began to develop in Cyprus' five main cities.<sup>14</sup> Intense inter-ethnic violence also broke out, resulting in more than 400 dead Turkish Cypriots and more than 200 dead Greek Cypriots. Approximately 25,000 Turkish Cypriots withdrew into four defended enclaves during this time.

In 1968, the Greek military junta in Athens joined with Greek Cypriot nationalists called EOKA-B and authorized a coup against President Makarios. Makarios had once been a strong supporter of *Enosis* with Greece, but by 1968 had come to believe that *Enosis* was an unrealistic goal and that it was unwise to commingle Cyprus' political interests with that of the Greek military dictatorship. His caution was warranted, but it also angered the Greek junta. On July 15, 1974, the coupists attacked the presidential palace in Lefkosia, killing approximately 3,000 Greek Cypriots and prompting President Makarios to flee to Britain. Five days later, using as justification their role as a guarantor power as well as the protection of the Turkish Cypriot population

from genocide, 40,000 Turkish soldiers and paratroopers invaded in a military campaign called the "Attila Operation" (later renamed the "Peace Operation"). Irregular Turkish Cypriot soldiers joined them and together they fought the badly outnumbered Greek and Greek Cypriot forces.

The Turkish military's presence, combined with atrocities they committed against the Greek civilian population, prompted approximately 162,000 Greek Cypriots to flee their homes in northern Cyprus with little more than the clothes on their backs. In retaliation, Greek Cypriots rounded up thousands of Turkish Cypriots living in southern Cyprus and herded them into soccer stadiums and similar holding facilities. Afraid of their Greek Cypriot captors and pressured by Turkish authorities to move north, approximately 50,000 Turkish Cypriots fled their homes and moved within the next twelve months. By the time a ceasefire was called on August 16, 1974, more than 6,000 Greek Cypriots had died, approximately 1,500 Turkish Cypriots had died, and the Turkish Army occupied 36% of Cyprus' territory. Both sides had large numbers of missing soldiers and citizens, an issue that would come to dominate the political scene in southern Cyprus for the next thirty years. Nearly one-third of the Cypriot population, both Greek and Turk, were now refugees in their own country. The island effectively had been partitioned into two ethnic zones.

Although Turkish authorities refer to it as a "population exchange" and the Republic of Cyprus authorities call it "ethnic cleansing," one effect of Turkey's military action was to almost entirely empty northern Cyprus of its Greek Cypriot population. In 1974, Turkish Cypriots comprised only about 18% of the country's census and they chafed under their minority status and political impotence. Even with the arrival of 50,000 Turkish Cypriot refugees from the south who were given a place to live, tens of thousands of Greek Cypriot homes, flats, and properties in northern Cyprus stood abandoned, victim to the ravages of war. Almost as soon as the Turkish Army consolidated its territorial holdings, Turkish mainlanders began arriving on Cyprus.

Why did Turkish settlers come to the island in the first place? The short answer is that they were invited and encouraged to do so. Turkish Cypriot journalist Sevgul Uludag answers this question in a 2004 column in which she highlighted the wretched living conditions suffered by settlers in Lefkosia, the northern Cypriot capital: "Why were they here? We know they are here because of the policies of Ankara. Because they are looking for a better life. People are moving all over



the world in search of a better life. In search of better options for their kids. In search of getting more out of life.”<sup>15</sup> Entirely different are the issues that prompted the government in Ankara and the authorities in the TRNC to extend invitations to Turkish mainlanders. Gilles Bertrand explains:

The first and official reason was to replace Greek Cypriot manpower in the agricultural sector of the new northern zone. But the other reason was to increase the ‘Turkish’ population in the island, to change the demographic balance in order to negotiate later a better political representation for Turkish Cypriots, in case of an agreement. Thirdly, Turkish settlers have been sent to achieve the ‘integration’ of Turkish Cypriots into Turkish culture and nationalism. For all these reasons, the first settlers were veterans of the intervention and people from Central Anatolia, one of Turkey’s most nationalist regions.<sup>16</sup>

To make Cyprus attractive to potential settlers, immigrants were given animals, money, land, and homes that were owned by Greek Cypriots who had fled to the south. Many settlers were also given citizenship rights mere days after arriving on the island, contravening the TRNC’s policy of requiring residency for five years.

It is not surprising that many Greek Cypriots denigrate Turkish immigrants in the press and in daily conversations. Given the number of Greek deaths following the Turkish military operation, the destruction of their communities, churches, and cultural artifacts, and the lack of access to their property or compensation for nearly thirty years, Greek Cypriots tend to loathe the settlers who have benefited at their expense. After all, the settlers live in *their* homes and farm *their* land. The settlers symbolically represent the very embodiment of Greek Cypriots’ fears, losses, resentments, and humiliation at the hands of the Turkish military.

More surprising is the denigration of Turkish immigrants by *Turkish Cypriots*. On the surface, one might expect Turkish Cypriots to have warm sentiments toward the Turkish immigrants with whom they share a cultural heritage, at least in name. Cyprus lies only 40 miles from Turkey’s southern border. But differences in dress, dialect, social attitudes, family size, and religious practices served to create wide divisions between the two groups. Because of their dire poverty, some Turkish immigrants turned to criminal activity upon arriving in Cyprus, and thereby created the conditions leading to charges that *all* settlers were criminals. Because of their religious conservatism,

immigrants filled mosques and built minarets throughout rural northern Cyprus, in stark contrast to the highly secular Turkish Cypriots. Because they knew that they were living in homes that did not legally belong to them, many immigrants failed to make improvements to the properties they were given, thereby feeding attitudes that they were lazy, unkempt, or indifferent to their surroundings. Because they came in large numbers and were willing to work for little money, the immigrants put downward pressure on salaries, and thereby diminished economic opportunities for the more highly educated Turkish Cypriots. Because they were physically and psychologically threatened at election time by Turkish soldiers, who noted that they could be sent back to Turkey at any time,<sup>17</sup> the immigrants historically voted for Rauf Denktash and the reigning political authority.<sup>18</sup> Denktash has been President of the TRNC since 1974 and was, therefore, responsible for inviting settlers to the island, providing them with resources, and granting them citizenship rights.

In spite of their seemingly favored alliance with the political leadership of the TRNC, many Turkish immigrants lead very difficult lives. According to one human rights leader with whom I spoke, settlers tend to live in rural villages that are strictly divided between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish immigrants. Settlers' children frequently go to segregated schools and are discouraged from playing with other children. Settlers receive low wages and their properties too often lack electricity or adequate water supplies, even in the capital city of Lefkosia.<sup>19</sup> Families try to discourage intermarriage between a settler and a Turkish Cypriot. One man told me that news of such a marriage often is treated like a family dishonor, akin to "announcing that you have contracted AIDS."

Turkish immigrants have few resources in terms of non-governmental organizations or civil society groups advocating on their behalf. History professor Nuri Cevikel was fired from his job at Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta because he opposed the policies of TRNC President Rauf Denktash and organized a group to lobby for Turkish settlers' rights.<sup>20</sup> Cevikel was the first member of a Turkish immigrant family to become a lecturer in northern Cyprus and his firing demonstrates the precarious political position in which settlers find themselves. Even progressive, bi-communal peace organizations, which might find common cause with the settlers, tend to ignore the settler community. One bi-communal leader reported to me that, "we simply don't allow settlers to participate in our organizations." In her

groundbreaking book *The Line: Women, Partition, and the Gender Order in Cyprus*, Cynthia Cockburn challenges these types of prohibitions on the part of progressive organizations. She includes rare interviews with three settler women who achingly describe their pain at being socially isolated in Cyprus.<sup>21</sup> Cockburn also summarizes the work of Sevgul Uludag, who has written the only in-depth journalistic accounts of settler life in northern Cyprus:

She [Uludag] found they do not regard themselves as the unitary group Turkish Cypriots see them as being. Many identify less with Turkey than with the particular region from which they come. They do not all, by any means, agree with the right-wing political parties and the deep state whose agents they are supposed to be. Many feel insecure, lacking the deeds that would give them ownership of homes they have lived in for years. They hear rumours they will be deported...many of them are not so much beneficiaries as victims in the TRNC.<sup>22</sup>

Although it is not identical, much of the anti-settler sentiment on the part of Turkish Cypriots (like that of Greek Cypriots) grows out of fear and resentment. Discomfort with cultural differences such as dress or religious practices may well account for some of the discriminatory treatment that settlers face at the hands of Turkish Cypriots. More tellingly, though, settlers' effects on the northern Cypriot economy arouse intense anxiety and linguistic denigration. "The first wave of settlers were [sic] mostly uneducated laborers. Sadly, they were treated as intruders by some Turkish Cypriots who viewed themselves as being more European and therefore superior."<sup>23</sup> Mete Hatay, an independent researcher in northern Cyprus, underscores the economic dynamic between Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish mainlanders in his explanation of the conflict between the two groups:

Turkish Cypriots having been a closed and isolated community for years, especially in the 1960s, suddenly found themselves all together in the north facing these newcomers and they reacted... The prejudices are mainly a reaction from the petty bourgeois, who, ironically are the ones who employ them. The image of this slave labour—the immigrant worker—is disturbing their European image, since they claim to be European... Most of these labourers work under extreme conditions, up to 15 hours a day without proper accommodation, exploited by Turkish Cypriots and Turkish businessmen.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, economic-based fears play an important role, as these quotes attest. Native Cypriots believe that the 30-year international trade embargo against the TRNC, combined with the diminishing salaries due to the glut of cheap Turkish migrant labor, forces them to emigrate to countries with more favorable economic opportunities. "Unless we can join Europe along with the south of the island, my sons will go to London...They have no future here. All the youngsters who want to do something with their lives, they are leaving."<sup>25</sup> The fear of having to leave Cyprus altogether is justified, as the population of Turkish Cypriots declined from 118,000 to roughly 87,000 since 1974, with most émigrés moving to London or Australia.<sup>26</sup> One need only compare the disparity in per capita annual incomes between southern Cyprus (\$12,000) and northern Cyprus (\$4,000) to understand what fuels Turkish Cypriot emigration patterns and economic anxieties.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to fear about economic effects, the denigration of Turkish immigrants reflects resentment about their political effect, either real or imagined. "Turkish Cypriots always discriminate against us. We are only remembered at election time," one woman says.<sup>28</sup> Turkish Cypriots understandably chafe at seeing residency requirements waived for the Turkish mainlanders who were given citizenship and voting rights soon after their arrival on the island. Such practices lead to charges that the TRNC government rigs elections<sup>29</sup> in order to stay in power and maintain the status quo—especially the "satellite state" relationship between northern Cyprus and the Turkish "motherland." President Denktash denies these charges. Moreover, press reports frequently focus on Turkish Cypriots' fear of being outnumbered by settlers and of losing their indigenous culture due to demographic changes.<sup>30</sup> Given the dearth of reliable figures on the numbers of Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers living in northern Cyprus, it is difficult to establish whether or not these genuinely-felt fears are exaggerated. In May 2003, however, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe published a report highly critical of the TRNC for its policies *vis-à-vis* Turkish immigrants, which the Assembly called "hidden colonization." The *Rapporteur* noted that such policies had a "considerable impact on the demographic, social and economic structure of the Turkish Cypriot community."<sup>31</sup>

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Taken by themselves, the derogatory and inflammatory names for Turkish immigrants that I listed early in this essay could be read as little more than racial bigotry. Cypriots who make such comments could be labeled as racist and I might end by lamenting the ubiquity of ethnic slurs found around the world.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, I do lament ethnic slurs, especially when they are used as a substitute for the hard work of arguing over policies and their effects. In this essay I have endeavored to contextualize the slurs against Turkish settlers in order to demonstrate that both Greek *and* Turkish Cypriots are culpable for these unkind and discriminatory linguistic practices. I mean also to highlight the *good reasons* why Cypriots have conflicts with the settlers as well as illuminating their *poor reasons*. In my experiences on both sides of the Green Line, I found individuals willing and even eager to catalogue their grievances against the “other side,” which include duplicity, corruption, war atrocities, mass graves, ethnic cleansing, and a host of human rights violations. In contrast, I rarely found Cypriots who would speak about their *own side's* mistakes. Such courageous individuals risk being labeled traitors and incurring the wrath of their fellows. In a country like Cyprus, one must take death threats and Grey Wolves very seriously.

From my limited vantage point as a foreigner, the ethno-nationalist conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots became increasingly curious and frustrating. The very real suffering that grows out of that conflict seems to “breathe up all the air” and thereby leaves little time, energy, or resources for others on the island who also suffer. The needs of Turkish settlers can be easily dismissed or “trumped.” A Greek Cypriot government spokesman recently demonstrated this practice when he said, “the issue of settlers was considered a ‘provocation and violation of every humanitarian law principle,’ adding that there were *more serious examples* of the violation of human rights in Cyprus, such as the refugees situation, ‘which in fact is a clear method of ethnic cleansing’” (emphasis added).<sup>33</sup> “Our pain is simply greater than your pain,” the spokesman seems to suggest, and therefore “we do not need to pay attention” to the settlers’ pain.

Sadly, Turkish immigrants are caught between the hostility and indifference of Greek Cypriots and the discrimination and disdain of Turkish Cypriots. Turkish immigrants came to Cyprus as political pawns, as human bargaining chips, and to provide backbreak-

ing labor. Among other reasons, the TRNC government welcomed them as a means to consolidate power and to maintain close ties with "Mother Turkey," upon whom northern Cyprus is entirely dependent. Ankara was happy to encourage the emigration of Turkish mainlanders because they would be "facts on the ground." In other words, they would help to keep Cyprus partitioned and secure Turkey's claims on northern Cyprus' territory. Given the hardships they face and the ways they have been used by their "enemies" and their "friends," it is surprising that Turkish immigrants want to stay in Cyprus at all. Yet for many young settlers and children, Cyprus is the only home they have ever known. There is no place outside Cyprus to which they can "go back." That so many of their parents find in Cyprus a better life suggests the degree of hardships they must have faced in Turkey prior to emigrating to the island.

Greek and Turkish Cypriots use very similar language to describe Turkish immigrants. They share similar fears and resentments. They practice a common rhetorical response of scapegoating and "mystifying" those who seem different and threatening. Many Cypriots see themselves as modern Europeans and therefore superior to the settlers, who are depicted as backwater peasants. Greek and Turkish Cypriots are highly secular in contrast to the devoutly religious Sunni Muslims who come from mainland Turkey. Both groups of Cypriots treat the newcomers as "other" and seek to limit the settlers' perceived political power. Each seems inured to the dire conditions in which many settlers must live. The immigrant's pains are "trumped" by the pains of those Cypriots living on the island prior to 1974. Both groups see the settlers as thieves, having stolen their homes and land in the case of Greek Cypriots, and having stolen their elections and future in the case of Turkish Cypriots. Many Cypriots on both sides of the island want to see the settlers go home, wherever that may be, as long as it is not on Cyprus.

For nearly thirty years, a combination of land mines, concrete barriers, barbed wire, and armed soldiers kept Greek and Turkish Cypriots apart. Nationalist politicians defined themselves in opposition to the Cypriots on the other side of the Green Line and urged their people to see themselves as ideologically and ethnically homogenous. Bi-communal peace groups worked for decades under the most difficult circumstances to help Cypriots heal the divisions on the island and to bring Greek and Turkish Cypriots together. Who would have expected that poorly educated and impoverished Turkish immigrants

unwittingly have done much to help Greek and Turkish Cypriots see their interests as conjoined and not just conflicted? Settlers symbolically stand as the new “other” against whom Cypriots rhetorically project their anxieties. By their presence on the island and the perceived threats they pose, Turkish immigrants play an important, if unwitting, role in the long drive toward the reunification of Cyprus. That it may come someday at their expense is deeply ironic and sad.

Can there be no other way? Must warring people *always* find or create a new enemy before they can join with their old one? Fortunately, a handful of individuals on the island have the courage and conviction to step forward and write about the immigrants’ humanitarian concerns.<sup>34</sup> One such individual is Sevgul Uludag, who challenges Turkish Cypriots to pay close attention to the physical and metaphorical “ghettos” in which Turkish settlers frequently live. She writes:

And how do we ‘break’ these ‘ghettos’ to normalize life on this island so that what is called ‘the settlers’ would be treated like human beings, would not be used by the regime against the Cypriots and would ‘find’ themselves? How do we deal with this sensitive and humanistic issue within the boundaries of international law? How do we create space within our own identities and cultures to refuse ghettos but at the same time accept the differences? How do we combat racism and poverty?<sup>35</sup>

Mete Hatay echoes Uludag’s willingness to recognize Turkish immigrants as individuals and not merely as interchangeable parts of a whole. But he thinks it unlikely that the settlers can be more fully embraced by Cypriots, at least not without major changes in attitudes. He writes, “I’m not optimistic, because we still need to work on becoming human beings, respecting non-Cypriots, we have to stop being the egotists of our own victimization.”<sup>36</sup> Like Uludag and Hatay, only a few Greek Cypriots in the south are willing to pay the price for speaking out on behalf of the immigrants. One writer of an unsigned opinion piece in the Greek Cypriot newspaper *Cyprus Mail* demonstrated this courage:

What useful purpose is served by talking tough about the settlers? Apart from helping the anti-solution camp in the north, it also creates a negative climate between the two communities. Even if we cite the legal argument that the settlers are here as a result of a war crime, we cannot ignore the other legal argument—that after 20 years on the island they too have certain rights. Nothing is as simple and straightforward as the politicians would have us believe.<sup>37</sup>

These writers serve to remind us that another way exists, and that the humanitarian concerns of our “enemies” need not be minimized due to the pain one’s own people have suffered. In another article about the settlers, Uludag illuminates the minimum conditions necessary to overcome the fear of those who are different from us: honesty, openness to change, and recognizing the other’s humanity.

They have been used against the expression of the will of the Turkish Cypriots throughout the 30 years they have been here. But they also started changing and a considerable number of them wanting peace and a solution on this island. ‘Settlers’ are also human beings with problems, difficulties, families, kids...Perhaps we can learn to ‘treat’ them in a human way rather than talking of them as though talking of a bag of potatoes to be shipped back!...Whatever solution we find it should have a human face where both Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and what we call the ‘settlers’ can feel comfortable with.<sup>38</sup>

Cypriots have very good reasons for opposing the policies that brought Turkish immigrants into their midst. Articulating those reasons or advocating changes to the policies is not racist. The ubiquity of anti-immigrant rhetoric and settler slurs warrant deep concern, however. Such talk dehumanizes the Turkish mainlanders and builds new barriers to resolving the Cyprus problem. The phrase “Cyprus problem” serves as shorthand for the well-known ethno-nationalist conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In this writer’s opinion, it is more accurate to refer to the *range* of immigrant-related issues and derogatory discourse discussed here as “Cyprus’ problems.” Cypriots’ experiences with ethnic conflict in the past fifty years seem to have done little to prepare them for the ethnic and multicultural challenges of our times. This is especially lamentable because it suggests that many more people will yet suffer on the island, that there will be continued calls to expel those who are most feared, and that new signs will be erected at the Larnaca airport. ●

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## Notes

1. The “Green Line” is the name commonly used to identify the U.N. patrolled buffer zone that partitions southern and northern Cyprus as well as separates their respective populations, Greek and Turkish Cypriots. It is also known in Cyprus by other names such as no man’s land, the dead zone, the intermediate area, the border, line of shame, and Attila line. See Yiannis Papadakis, “Nicosia after 1960: A River, a Bridge and a Dead Zone,” in *Cyprus: Social Opening, European Integration, Globalization*, edited by Gisela Welz and Petra Ilyes (Frankfurt am Main: Kulturanthropologie Notizen, 2001). See also



his discussion of the Green Line in Yiannis Papadakis, "Walking in the *Hora*: 'Place' and 'Non-Place' in Divided Nicosia," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 8, no. 2 (1998): 302–327.

2. Thanks to a generous sabbatical leave from Macalester College, I lived in Lefkosia, Cyprus, for four months during the fall of 2003. I wish to thank the staff of the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Center (CAARI) for graciously providing me with housing and assistance during my time on the island. I am indebted to the following individuals for formal interviews, conversation, or providing me with information that informs this essay: Serdar Atai, Faize Akcaba, Cynthia Cockburn, Thomas Davis, Greg Defteros, Maria Hadjipavlou, Efi Marcou, Diana Markides, Marios Michaelides Yiannis Laouris, Nora Liasis, Nikos Messios, Phivos Nicolaidis, Iley Ozerlat, Jeanne Ramsden, Sev gul Uludag, Nerina Weisz, and Hayati Yasamsal. I would also like to acknowledge the indispensable research skills of Macalester College student Robin Rich. All of the opinions expressed in this essay are solely those of the author.

3. I do not mean to suggest that every person in Cyprus shares these sentiments. Rather, my intention is to highlight the ubiquity of such talk and the social norms that sanction it.

4. The exact number of Turkish immigrants is not known and is widely disputed. A list of the names of settlers who have the right to vote in TRNC elections numbers approximately 41,000, but that does not include non-citizens, children, seasonal workers, or illegal immigrants. Nuri Cevikel, president of a Turkish settlers' association in northern Cyprus, puts the number of settlers at 60,000. The government of the Republic of Cyprus puts the number at approximately 120,000. See Menelaos Hadjicostis, "Settlers Will Vote Against Denktash," *Cyprus Weekly* (August 8–21, 2003), available online at <http://news.pseka.net/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=4095>; and Utku Bila and Charlie Charalambous, "Turkish Settlers in Cyprus are Still Seeking Acceptance," *Kathimerini*, English edition (23 April 2004), available online at [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_politics\\_1308830\\_23/04/2004\\_42040](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_politics_1308830_23/04/2004_42040). Government figures of estimated settlers are drawn from "Turkish Colonization," on the Republic of Cyprus web page, available online at <http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/cyphome/govhome.nsf/CyprusIssueLookup?ReadForm&languageNo=1>.

5. Politicians in southern Cyprus have long claimed that Greek Cypriot refugees will be able to return home and reclaim their property in northern Cyprus upon reunification. Similarly, the removal of all Turkish troops and all Turkish settlers is a common demand. See "Settlers also have Rights," *Cyprus Mail* (17 September 2003), available online at <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/>. See also Rebecca Bryant, "An Ironic Result in Cyprus," *Middle East Report On Line* (12 May 2004), available online at <http://www.merip.org/>. Erdal Guven, columnist for the Istanbul *Daily Radikal*, identified fears of Turkish troops and resentment about losing their property to Turkish settlers as reasons for Greek Cypriots' resounding rejection of the Annan Plan in the April 24, 2004 referendum. Mr. Guven made these remarks during the Macalester Faculty Development International Seminar in Istanbul, June 8, 2004.

6. Also known as the Turkish National Movement Party (Milliyetci Hareket Partisi). Grey Wolves are a fascist paramilitary organization with ties to the Turkish government in Ankara. They were implicated in the assassination of Turkish Cypriot journalist Kutlu Adali in 1996. At the time of his death, Adali had published articles critical of the relationship between TRNC authorities and the "deep state" in Turkey. He believed that the

Turkish troops and settlers posed a greater danger to Turkish Cypriots than did Greek Cypriots in the south. For a fuller discussion of Grey Wolves and other human rights violations in northern Cyprus, see Cyprus Action Network, "Overall View of Political Oppression in North Cyprus," available online at <http://www.cypirusaction.org/human-rights/terrorism/longintro.html>.

7. The term *ethno-nationalism* is summarized by Cynthia Cockburn as a process in which a "culturally identified group...may awake to feel they are being in some way 'named' and inferiorized. They may begin mobilizing in that name, generating a discourse of difference, entering into rivalry with 'others' over resources and opportunities. Imaginations may turn to nationhood, such that ethnicity becomes *ethno-nationalism* and visionary politicians embark on a project of nation-statehood. They make take up arms to achieve it. And finally there may emerge a collectivity with the power to impose monocultural control, denying validity to others' identity claims, or casting other named groups in specific and inferior societal roles." Cynthia Cockburn, *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus* (London: Zed Books, 2004), p. 31.

8. Joseph Joseph, *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics, From Independence to the Threshold of the European Union* (London, New York: Macmillan Press/St. Martin's, 1997), p. 16.

9. See Brendan O'Malley and Ian Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy: America, Espionage and the Turkish Invasion* (London: Verso, 1997); also Joseph 1997.

10. Foreign workers may receive temporary work permits for up to five years, but are not eligible for Cypriot citizenship.

11. Leopoldo Rodriguez, Fatma Guven-Lisaniler, and Sevin Ugural, "Sex Work and State Regulations in Northern Cyprus." Paper presented to the conference The Languages of Gender, University of Cyprus, May 16–17, 2003, Nicosia, Cyprus. Also available online at <http://www.geocities.com/ilisaniler/papers/metin.htm>.

12. For discussions of the changing nature of nationalism and "Cypriotism," see Yianis Papadakis, *Perceptions of History and Collective Identity: A Study of Contemporary Greek Cypriot and Turkish Nationalism*, Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Cambridge, 1993; Moira Killoran, "Nationalism and Embodied Memory in Northern Cyprus," in *Cyprus and its People: Nation, Identity, and Experience in an Unimaginable Community, 1955–1997*, ed. Vangelis Calotychos (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 171–170; Christoph Ramm, "Conceptions of National Identity in Cyprus and the Question of European Identity," *Journal of Cyprus Studies* 8, no. 9; and Caesar V. Mavratsas, "The Ideological Contest between Greek-Cypriot Nationalism and Cypriotism 1974–1995: Politics, Social Memory and Identity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20, no. 4, pp. 717–738.

13. Excellent detailed histories of this time period can be found in William Hale, *Turkey and Regional Politics after the Cold War: Greece, Cyprus, Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774–2000* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000); and Keith Kyle, *Cyprus* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1984).

14. Diana Weston Markides, *Cyprus 1957–1963: From Colonial Conflict to Constitutional Crisis* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Modern Greek Studies, University of Minnesota, 2001).

15. Sevgul Uludag, "Breaking Down the Ghettos," *Alithia* (4 July 2004), available online at <http://www.hamamboculeri.org/>.

16. Gilles Bertrand, "Turkish Cypriot's Exit, Voice and Loyalty," Weltpolitik.net, available online at <http://www.weltpolitik.net/Regionen/Europa/Zypern/Analysen>. A modified version of this paper was originally presented at the EuroFor conference in Austria, Ethnic Conflicts: Prevention, Intervention and Solution Strategies, organized by the European Research Forum on Migration and Ethnic Relations, April 4–7, 2002.
17. According to settlers in one news report, "officers from the Turkish military force stationed in north Cyprus have toured settler villages to warn that a vote for the opposition is 'a vote against Turkey,'" *Financial Times* (13 December 2003): 8. See also Sevgul Uludag, "So How about the 'Settlers'?" *Alithia* (23 March 2003), available online at <http://www.hamamboculeri.org/>.
18. This has been changing recently. Mete Hatay argues that election results do not support an interpretation of settlers voting as a bloc for Rauf Denktaş: "When I looked at the election results, it wasn't like that. There were different political orientations among these people. They were Alawites, different religious sects, social democrats, socialists, fascists. They were part of an intricate mosaic." Quoted in Gohkan Tezgor, "Settlers in the North: A Complex Mosaic of Identity," *Cyprus Mail* (17 June 2003), available online at <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/>. Settlers represented by Nuri Cevikel's organization believe that their economic well-being and future as a part of the EU had been "sold out" by President Denktaş's rejection of the Annan Plan. Cevikel notes that the Annan Plan was the best chance that the settlers had for staying in Cyprus. See Hadjicostis 2003.
19. Uludag, "Breaking Down."
20. Kerin Hope, "Turkish Settlers Hold Key to Cyprus Future," *Financial Times* (13 December 2003): 8. See also Hadjicostis 2003.
21. Cockburn, pp. 209–217.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
23. Amberin Zaman, "Cyprus Vote Stirs Immigrant Fears," *Los Angeles Times* (22 April 2004): 4.
24. Tezgor 2003.
25. Tabitha Morgan, "Turkish Cypriots Fear 'Turkification,'" BBC News broadcast December 10–11, 2003 on *BBC World Service*, available online at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/programmes/from\\_our\\_own\\_correspondent/3309899.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/3309899.stm).
26. "54,000 Settlers in Cyprus Poll," *Kathimerini*, English edition (24 October 2003), available online at [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_politics\\_22286680\\_24/10/2003\\_35560](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_politics_22286680_24/10/2003_35560).
27. Celestine Bohlen, "Fresh Tensions for Cyprus: Counting the Newcomers," *New York Times* (23 January 1997): A10.
28. Bila and Charalambous 2004.
29. Jean Christou, "Turkish Cypriots want Settlers' Election Rights Reversed," *Cyprus Mail* (24 June 2003), available online at <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/>.
30. For example, Kutlu Adali, "We Cry but We Still Leave," *Yeni Duzen* (30 August 1994), available online at [http://www.justice4cyprus.org/Archive\\_yeniduzen.htm](http://www.justice4cyprus.org/Archive_yeniduzen.htm); Jean Christou, "Government says Settlers Now Outnumber Turkish Cypriots," *Cyprus Mail* (25 April 2001), available online at <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/>.
31. Jaakko Laakso, Rapporteur, "Colonisation by Turkish Settlers of the Occupied Part of Cyprus," Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, May 2, 2003, available online at

<http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc03/EDOC9799.htm>. The report was vigorously refuted by Turkish authorities who found the title of the report to be prejudicial, and who pointedly noted that the Greek Cypriot government also had to import foreign workers to fill jobs: "It is curious how a worker happens to be a 'citizen' when he thus enters the South, but a 'settler' if he happens to enter the North." See Appendix 6 of the Rapporteur's report, "Dissenting Opinion of Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu."

32. In fact, Mehmet Ali Talat, leader of the Republican Turkish Party in northern Cyprus, charged Greek Cypriots with racism for their insistence on expelling Turkish settlers as a condition for approving the Annan Plan: "I understand the Greek Cypriot view, however I believe that their approach, many Greek Cypriot policies in the south are a little racist. I don't like saying that but unfortunately, deliberately or not, it is a racist approach. They are innocent people who were transported here for a lot of reasons, but they cannot be blamed for causing the Cyprus problem." Quoted in Jean Christou, "Government Slams Talat Interview," *Cyprus Mail* (29 July 2003), available online at <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/>.

33. Ibid.

34. Cypriots who publicly advocate on behalf of the Turkish immigrants may well exist, but I am unaware of them if they write in Greek or Turkish publications. If English language sources are even slightly representative of the other language publications in Cyprus, then the vast majority of writers express enmity toward the immigrants.

35. Uludag, "Breaking Down," 2004.

36. Tezgor, "Settlers in the North," 2003.

37. "Settlers also have Rights," *Cyprus Mail* (18 September 2003), available online at <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/>.

38. Uludag, "So How About Those 'Settlers?'"

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