

The departure of the Greeks from Egypt, 1961: the perspective of Greek diplomacy

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou 

University of Athens

xevanthis@arch.uoa.gr

The departure of the greater part of the Greek community from Egypt is one of the many sad stories of the post-war Mediterranean. This article focuses upon the reports of the Greek Consul-General in Alexandria, Byron Theodoropoulos, regarding the Egyptian ‘Socialist Laws’ of summer 1961, which gave the coup de grâce to the Greek community. It argues that the expulsion of the Greeks was part of a wider redistribution of power in the region. This episode, together with similar experiences in other parts of the Mediterranean, evidently cemented the determination of a younger generation of political leaders and diplomats to seek Greece’s future in the cosmopolitan, post-nationalist West, rather than in a ‘Near East’ rife with nationalism and economic failure.

Keywords: Nasserism; Arab socialism; Greek foreign policy; Greeks of Egypt; Eastern Mediterranean

The Greeks were the last foreign community to leave Egypt. Their predicament was a small part of the vortex of Eastern Mediterranean international politics of the early post-war era. Nevertheless, Greek–Egyptian relations and the history of the Greeks of Egypt (*Egyptiots*) have become the subject of lively scholarly debates.¹

1 A. Kitroeff, *The Greeks in Egypt, 1919–1939: Ethnicity and Class* (Oxford 1989); A. Kitroeff, *The Greeks and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cairo 2019); F. Karanasou, ‘The Greeks in Egypt: From Mohammed Ali to Nasser, 1805–1961’, in R. Clogg (ed.), *The Greek Diaspora in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke 1999) 24–57; E. Soulogiannis, *Η θέση των Ελλήνων στην Αίγυπτο* (Athens 1999); A. Kazamias, ‘The “purge of the Greeks” from Nasserite Egypt: myths and realities’, *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 35 (2009) 13–34; Y. Sakkas, *Η Ελλάδα, το Κυπριακό και ο αραβικός κόσμος, 1947–1974* (Athens 2012); E. Hatzivassiliou, ‘Greece and the Arabs, 1956–1958’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 16 (1992) 49–82; M. Koumas, ‘Greek policy in the Levant and the Greek community of Alexandria, 1947–1961’, in A. Yangou, G. Kazamias and R. Holland (eds.), *The Greeks and the British in the Levant, 1800–1960s: Between Empires and Nations* (London 2016) 203–15; A. Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt:*

This article revisits the departure of the Greeks from Egypt from the perspective of Greek diplomacy. It discusses Athens' ultimately unsuccessful efforts to arrest or slow down the exodus of the community after the Suez crisis, and focuses upon the impact of the nationalizations of 1961, on which the Greek diplomatic authorities in Egypt (chiefly Byron Theodoropoulos, the consul-general in Alexandria) extensively reported. The article is based on research in the archives of the Prime Minister, Constantine Karamanlis, and the Foreign Minister, Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza, as well as on British Foreign Office documents. The unusually large volume of relevant documents in the personal archives of the two leading Greek foreign policy-makers is telling about the importance that the Greek government attached to the issue.

Greek foreign policy and the Egyptians on the road to the 1961 Socialist Laws

The rise of the Arab nationalists to power in 1952 led to a radical transformation of the Egyptian economy and society as well as foreign policy. The privileged position of foreign communities in the country was soon eroded. The decline of their relative position had already started under the previous monarchist regime, first with the measures of the Wafd government in the 1920s, the abolition of the Capitulations in 1937, and above all with the 1947 legislation for the 'Egyptianization' of enterprises. The process was completed under Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s. The Anglo-French invasion of 1956 led to a further radicalization of the Egyptian regime, which now turned openly against the foreign presence in the country. Moreover, in January 1957, new legislation launched the second phase of the 'Egyptianization' of enterprises. This provided that, within five years, banks, insurance companies and commercial agencies should be administered by Egyptian nationals only; the shares of all companies would be registered and would have to belong to Egyptian nationals.²

The Greek emigration from Egypt had started in the 1930s and was accelerated in the aftermath of the Second World War.³ Unlike the other foreign communities, the Greeks were not forced out of the country in the aftermath of the Suez crisis. Moreover, the 1957

Diaspora Politics and Emigration, 1937–1962 (New York 2017); M. Koumas, 'Cold War dilemmas, superpower influence, and regional interests: Greece and the Palestinian question, 1947–49', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 19 (2017) 99–124. The term 'community' is used in this article to describe the Greek minority in Egypt as a whole; however, the same term was used to define the local social organization ('communities') of the Greeks in many Egyptian cities, the most prominent of which was the one in Alexandria.

2 On the impact of the Suez crisis and the 1957 Egyptianization decrees on the Egyptian economy and international position, see R. L. Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire: State and Business in Decolonizing Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, 1945–1963* (Princeton 1998) 128–41. For the evolution of Nasser's policies, see also P. O'Brien, *The Revolution in Egypt's Economic System: From Private Enterprise to Socialism, 1952–1965* (New York 1966); R. L. Tignor, 'Decolonization and business: The case of Egypt', *The Journal of Modern History* 59 (1987) 479–505.

3 A. Ntalachanis, 'The emigration of Greeks from Egypt during the early post-war years', *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 35 (2009) 35–44.

Egyptianization measures were less severe than the previous ‘wave’ of 1947 and were implemented only in part.⁴ However the events of 1956–7 represented a serious blow to the Egyptians, the only large foreign community now remaining in the country. Moreover, the 1957 Egyptianization laws intensified the feeling of insecurity regarding their position. The five-year deadline provided by these laws was decisive, because a foreigner receiving Egyptian nationality acquired full economic rights only five years after naturalization. This meant that there was no way for a foreigner to be exempted from the measures by becoming an Egyptian citizen.⁵ In summer 1957, the Greek Foreign Ministry estimated that approximately 60,000 Greeks lived in Egypt with Greek citizenship, 10,000 with Egyptian and 5,000 with British (Cypriot) citizenship. According to Greek diplomatic sources, in the wake of the Suez crisis, the Greeks were leaving Egypt at a rate of 500 persons per month.⁶ To make matters worse, the community was deeply divided over its response to the 1957 laws: the leadership asked that the Greeks be ‘exempted’ from the measures; the Left was in favour of the community’s adjustment to the nationalist regime through the acquisition of Egyptian nationality.⁷

Athens had to take into account additional regional pressures. Greece had sided with Egypt during the Suez crisis (angering its allies, in particular Britain), but it still needed to carry out a difficult balancing act between its need to maintain Arab support for its appeals to the UN on Cyprus, as well as for the Alexandria and Jerusalem Patriarchates, and its own identity as a Western state. Following the Suez crisis, the Greek government attempted to convince the Americans that the West could not lure Nasser into an anti-Soviet alliance, since the Arabs did not feel that they faced a threat from the Kremlin; the West could only ensure Arab benevolent neutrality in the Cold War, by endorsing Nasser’s claim for independence and economic development. However, at least at that stage, these Greek arguments did not seem to impress an

4 See this argument in Kazamias, ‘The “purge of the Greeks”’, 26–7.

5 Note (unsigned), 19 February, and Note (Liatis), 9 August 1957, in Athens, Konstantinos G. Karamanlis Foundation, Karamanlis Archive, file 3A (hereafter KA/3A). See also the speech by the Minister for the Prime Minister’s Office, Constantin Tsatsos, in *Επίσημα Πρακτικά των Συνεδριάσεων της Βουλής*, 12 February 1957 (Athens 1957).

6 Note (Brown), 4 January 1957, London, The National Archives (hereafter, TNA), FO 371/125604/1; Porter (NATO) to Foreign Office, 10 January 1957, TNA/FO 371/130018/7; Peake (Athens) to Selwyn Lloyd, 8 February 1957, TNA/FO 371/130018/1. See also Soulogiannis, *Η θέση των Ελλήνων στην Αίγυπτο*, 224–31. There is a discrepancy in the sources regarding the size of the ‘Greek community’. The figure of 75,000 is mentioned in Greek sources but does not appear in official Egyptian statistics, which refer to the presence in 1960 of 47,763 persons with Greek citizenship. The Egyptian sources do not include in the figures those Greeks with British/Cypriot or Egyptian nationality, but they give smaller numbers for those with Greek nationality as well. See the table in Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt*, 3.

7 For the internal debates within the community see, among others, S. Chrysotomidis, ‘Η ελληνική παροικία της Αιγύπτου: η Έξοδος’, *Αρχαιοτάξιο* 4 (2002) 117–32; C. E. Daratzikis, *Διπλωματικές σημειώσεις από την Αίγυπτο (1955–1976)* (Athens 2000) 64–77; Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt*, 61–7.

American policy focused upon the containment of the Soviet Union and viewing Middle Eastern affairs through the ‘Cold War lens’.⁸

In February 1957, the Greek Ambassador to Cairo, Dimitrios Lambros, and the Greek Foreign Ministry tried to put together a response to the Egyptianization laws. They wanted to conclude a Treaty on Residence with Egypt (or to exchange letters with Cairo, which would have the same effect) providing that those Greeks already working in the country would continue their activities but no new persons would be allowed to enter the sectors in question. In this way, the Greek Foreign Ministry held, the community would be gradually evicted, but the Greek state would have time to limit the damage; it was in any case impossible for Athens to accommodate the big, urban Egyptian community if it suddenly left Egypt. On 20 February, Karamanlis wrote to Nasser emphasizing the need to counter the ‘feeling of panic’ among the Greeks of Egypt, which could lead to a ‘mass exodus’. On 3 March, Ambassador Lambros handed Nasser a memorandum and stressed that the Greek community needed an official reassurance which would offset the ‘psychosis of exodus’. Nasser promised to accommodate persons already working as commercial agents and protested that he did not aim to oust the Greeks from Egypt. However, for those employed in banks and insurance companies, the Egyptians only promised to apply the law at the very end of the five-year deadline.⁹ Thus, by that time, Athens was arguing that the Egyptians should adjust to Arab nationalism, rather than make a futile attempt to retain an untenable privileged status. Authors have noted that this position was in fact very close to the views of the Egyptian Left.¹⁰

In the months that followed, Cairo failed to implement Nasser’s verbal promises and the state of mind of the Egyptians did not improve. Athens thus sought a public gesture by Nasser which would reassure the Greek community. A visit by Karamanlis to Egypt was scheduled for mid-August 1957; this was the first official visit of a Western leader to Cairo after the Suez crisis, and evidently caused some US impatience and British hostility. However, it was crucial to secure Arab support for Cyprus and to protect the Greeks of Egypt, and Karamanlis decided to go. He was triumphantly received in Alexandria by the city’s 35,000-strong Greek community. Karamanlis argued for an adjustment of the community to the new regime, through the acquisition of Egyptian

8 S. G. Xydis, *Cyprus: Conflict and Conciliation, 1954–1958* (Columbus, OH 1967) 185 and 230; Hatzivassiliou, ‘Greece and the Arabs’. On the notion of the Cold War lens, see M. Connelly, ‘Taking off the Cold War lens: visions of North–South conflict during the Algerian War of Independence’, *American Historical Review* 105 (2000) 739–69.

9 Note (unsigned), 19 February, Lambros (Cairo) to Foreign Ministry, 2 August, and Greek Memorandum to Nasser, 3 March 1957, KA/3A; Karamanlis to Nasser, 20 February 1957, in C. Svolopoulos (ed.), *Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής: Αρχείο, γεγονότα και κείμενα* [hereafter *Καραμανλής*], II (Athens 1993) 287. See also Sakkas, *Η Ελλάδα, το Κυπριακό και ο αραβικός κόσμος*, 89–94.

10 Chrysostomidis, ‘Η ελληνική παροικία’, 122–5; Y. Sakkas, ‘Greece and the mass exodus of the Egyptian Greeks, 1956–66’, *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 35 (2009) 101–15; see also the sub-chapter ‘The Athens–Cairo connection’ in Kitroeff, *The Greeks and the Making of Modern Egypt*.

citizenship. The final communiqué also contained the much-needed public reassurance to the Egyptians, recording Cairo's determination to secure their well-being.¹¹

The pace of the departure of the Egyptians was reduced after the visit. However, the Greek government was not fully satisfied with the outcome: the Egyptians had agreed to slow down, but not to arrest, the rate of flight. Athens was also concerned that a part of the Egyptian regime (the 'anti-foreigner, fanatical circles' according to an article in *Kathimerini*, evidently echoing the views of the Foreign Ministry) would not abide by these assurances.¹² Alexis Liatis, the head of the Middle Eastern and African department of the Foreign Ministry and a former consul-general in Alexandria, told the British that the future was not bright for the Greek community, since the Egyptians were steadily acquiring the technical skills needed to replace foreigners.¹³

Nor did regional developments help Greek aims: the West and the forces of Arab nationalism repeatedly clashed during the 1957 Syrian crisis, the 1958 Anglo-American interventions in Lebanon and Jordan, and the 1958 Iraqi revolution. Facing huge challenges when it came to the Cyprus question, the Greek government had to counter the rise of neutralism in Greek public opinion.¹⁴ Indeed, pressures for the adoption of a policy of non-alignment (thus, for a Greek withdrawal from the West) came both from within and outside the country. Athens rejected Nasser's suggestions (for example, during the July 1958 Brioni conference with Tito) for the formation of a non-aligned axis between Belgrade, Athens and Cairo; interestingly, Tito was even more openly dismissive towards this idea than Averoff himself.¹⁵ Nevertheless, after 1959, a US–Egyptian rapprochement took place which pleased Athens.¹⁶ Cairo, now united with Syria in the United Arab Republic (UAR), turned its attention to the rivalry with Kassem's Iraq for Arab leadership and to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).¹⁷

In bilateral relations, Athens was prepared to make significant concessions to Cairo. In 1958, Athens and Cairo settled the Egyptian deficit in commercial exchanges. Soon, however, a new Egyptian deficit appeared, which led to a new agreement on 19 April 1960 that facilitated the export of Greek tobacco to Egypt and of Egyptian cotton to

11 On the visit to Egypt, see *Καραμανλής*, II, 399–408; 'Visits abroad: Egypt, 1957', KA/ 343A; Hatzivassiliou, 'Greece and the Arabs'; Chrysostomidis, 'Η ελληνική παροιμία', 128–9; E. Soulogiannis, 'Ο Κ. Καραμανλής και ο ελληνισμός της Αιγύπτου (1957 κ.ε.) με κάποια αναφορά στις ελληνοαιγυπτιακές σχέσεις', in C. Svolopoulos, K. E. Botsiou and E. Hatzivassiliou (eds.), *Konstantinos Karamanlis in the Twentieth Century*, II (Athens 2008) 364–72.

12 *Καραμανλής*, II, 406–7.

13 Allen (Athens) to Selwyn Lloyd, 29 August 1957, TNA/FO 371/130018/5.

14 I. D. Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and Anti-Americanism in Post-war Greece, 1945–1967* (Aldershot 2007); I. D. Stefanidis, "Telling America's story": US propaganda operations and Greek public reactions', *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 30 (2004) 39–95.

15 E. Hatzivassiliou, *Greece and the Cold War: Frontline State, 1952–1967* (London 2006) 110.

16 H. W. Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism: The United States and the Emergence of the Third World, 1947–1960* (New York 1989) 296–303.

17 R. B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson and the Nonaligned World* (Cambridge 2013).

Greece.¹⁸ Athens also appeared willing to overlook other, more sinister initiatives of the Egyptians, such as the dispatch in 1960, through the UAR Embassy in Athens, of a personal message from Nasser to Georgios Grivas, the former leader of the armed organization EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters), who was now entering Greek politics, accusing Karamanlis of treason in the 1959 Cyprus settlement.¹⁹ Grivas, a hardline nationalist, had shown Nasserist tendencies in the past; for example, during the 1956 Suez crisis, he had called for Greece's withdrawal from NATO and was supported in this by the Greek Left – two unlikely partners converging against the country's pro-Western policy.²⁰ In other words, the 1960 initiative of the UAR Embassy was coming very close to an effort to destabilize the Greek pro-Western regime. However, Athens, rather hypocritically, tried to look the other way. There was a guideline, which did not always remain unspoken, regarding relations with Cairo:

The steady reduction of the numbers of Egyptian Greeks is the natural result of the intellectual, cultural and professional ascent of the locals. However, the pace of this reduction and the conditions in which the members of the community leave, will be affected by the climate in Greek–Egyptian relations.²¹

The Minister for Social Welfare, Andreas Stratos, visited Egypt on 20–28 February 1960. Stratos, a known supporter of a pro-Arab policy, met his Egyptian counterpart, Hussein el-Safei. He raised the problem of a recent Egyptian law (no. 19/1959), according to which a foreign national wishing to work in the country would need to apply for a special permit from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, also paying a substantial amount of money which many poor Egyptians could not afford. Stratos asked that Greeks born in Egypt should either be exempted from this measure or asked to pay a reduced sum.²² On his departure from the country, he also made an impressive appeal to the Greek community to integrate into the new Egyptian society: he encouraged the Egyptians to learn Arabic and stressed that 'the efforts to adjust must be intensified, and follow the quick pace of the changes [in Egypt]'.²³

18 Note (Ministry of Commerce), 'Commercial Exchanges with Egypt', 12 May 1960, and Note (Foreign Ministry, Economic Affairs directory), 'On Commercial and Economic Relations with Egypt', 21 May 1960, KA/12A; Report (National Tobacco Organization), 23 September 1960, KA/13A; press cutting, *Journal du Commerce et de la Marine* (Alexandria), 20 February 1959, TNA/FO 371/144541/1; see also, Cairo to Foreign Office, 10 May 1960, TNA/FO 371/152987/1.

19 Athens to Foreign Office, 23 April 1960, TNA/FO 371/152969/2.

20 E. Hatzivassiliou, 'Σουέζ και Ουγγαρία, φθινόπωρο 1956: η πρόσληψη της κρίσης στην Ελλάδα', *Αγορά χωρίς Σύννομα* 12 (2007) 324–47.

21 Note (Foreign Ministry), no date [evidently of spring 1959], 'East–West competition in the Middle East – the position of Greece', in Athens, Konstantinos G. Karamanlis Foundation, Evangelos Averoff Political Archive, file 6 (hereafter APA/6).

22 Note (Cairo Embassy), 25 May 1960, and Note (Stratos, no date), KA/12A.

23 *Ταχυδρόμος*, 29 February 1960.

In early June 1960, Nasser paid an official visit to Greece, his first to a NATO country. This caused an unexpected problem with Frederica, Queen of the Hellenes, who refused to receive the Egyptian leader and suggested that she would arrange to be abroad during his visit.²⁴ Karamanlis, in a later note, rather impatiently referred to the queen's 'snobbery',²⁵ although one needs to keep in mind that Nasser had overthrown the Egyptian monarchy, a very serious issue for the insecure Greek Crown. The government and the Patriarch of Alexandria, Christophoros, explained to the angry queen that the visit was necessary in order to protect the Greeks of Egypt, and Frederica came to terms with the prospect.²⁶ Prior to the visit, the Arab–Greek League was founded in Athens, under the chairmanship of the UAR Minister of the Interior, Zakaria Mohieddin, who regularly visited Greece.²⁷

Preparing for the visit, the Greek Foreign Ministry reviewed the position of the Egyptians. The Ministry wanted to exempt the branches of two Greek banks from the 'Egyptianization' laws or to defer their Egyptianization for another five years; these branches provided credit to small Greek businesses, and their disappearance would boost the flight of the community.²⁸ Tellingly, the Egyptian press regarded this issue as crucial for the future of the community, and also feared that the nationalization of the banks was the prelude to a general nationalization, 'a depressing nightmare for private enterprises'.²⁹ Athens also wanted to secure similar arrangements (exemption or deferment for five years) for the Egyptianization of commercial agencies, while the problem of the employment of foreign nationals (which Stratos had raised) had not been settled.³⁰ Two Greeks had been arrested for espionage for Israel, but the public denunciation of their activity by Averoff had satisfied the Egyptians.³¹ The Foreign Ministry stressed that, since 1952, the Greeks of Egypt had made large investments in the country, a sign of their disposition to contribute to its development.³² Nevertheless, during the visit, the Egyptians again refrained from offering tangible measures in favour of the Greek community. Nasser praised the presence of the Greeks and made a vague reference to the possible settlement of the issue of the banks, but he went no further.³³

24 Simon (Athens) to Foreign Office, 31 December 1959, TNA/FO 371/144523/7; Allen to Sarrel, 1 April 1960, TNA/FO 371/152969/1.

25 Karamanlis, note (late 1960s) in *Καραμανλής*, IV, 322–3.

26 Baizos (Alexandria) to Foreign Ministry, 31 May 1960, KA/12A.

27 Cairo to Foreign Office, 26 May 1960, TNA/FO 371/152969/4.

28 Note, 'Egyptianization of Banks', 30 May, Note (Foreign Ministry, Economic Affairs directory), 'On Commercial and Economic Relations with Egypt', 21 May, and Lambros to Foreign Ministry, 20 May 1960, KA/12A.

29 Editorial, 'Η κρατικοποίησης και αι ιδιωτικά επιχειρήσεις', *Ταχυδρόμος*, 18 February 1960.

30 Notes, 'Egyptianization of Commercial Agencies', 30 May and 'Work of Foreigners in UAR', 25 May 1960, KA/12A.

31 Note (Cairo Embassy), 20 May 1960, KA/12A.

32 Note, 30 May 1960, KA/12A.

33 Allen to Selwyn Lloyd, 14 June 1960, TNA/FO 371/152969/6.

During the visit, the Egyptian press went out of its way to praise the populist Egyptian leader. The UAR was not a liberal democracy; its press was expected to pay homage to the hero holding the reins of the state:

Tomorrow the President of the UAR, Gamal Abdel Nasser, will arrive in Greece; the Prime Representative of the 30 million People of UAR; the pervasive Herald of the whole of Arabism. The Sun, the Leader of the Middle East, whose light has illuminated the whole of Africa, while having an unsetting [ἀνέσπερον] reflection throughout Asia. No 'lamp of Diogenes' discovered him; he sprang, from the hand of God, from the essence of the Arab Heritage, fully armed in Mind and Heart, the dynamic bearer and victor of the Ideals of the Nation and Freedom.³⁴

Reporting on the visit, the Alexandrian *Tachydromos* needed to prove the community's loyalty to the regime, but this led to hyperbole: 'perhaps the sky of Attica has never been as bright as yesterday' (8 June). It portrayed Nasser as a popular hero, admired by the average Greek for his resistance to the British and the French and for his success in Egyptian industrialization.³⁵ However, despite hopes for a 'brotherly understanding' (the title of the editorial of 11 June), the paper also mentioned an ominous discrepancy in the reporting of Nasser's reply to a question on the Egyptianization of Greek banks: Reuters reported him as replying that 'the problem will be solved without changing the law', but Cairo radio quoted him as saying that 'there will be a way to settle the issue of compensation' (thus implying that the process would proceed anyway).³⁶ In other words, the visit did not solve the outstanding problems of the Egyptians, even if it confirmed the good state of Greek–Egyptian relations.

In September 1960, a new espionage case occurred. This was a very serious incident, since officials of Greek consulates in Egypt were implicated, although it was clear that this was without the knowledge or consent of the Foreign Ministry. In fact, the Egyptians did not publicize the case, so as to protect their relations with Greece. The enactment of Law 19/1959 was also crucial, placing bureaucratic and financial obstacles to the employment of Greeks, and providing that the number of foreigners employed in any company should not exceed 15% of personnel, while their salaries should not exceed 25% of the total wage bill; this accelerated the exodus.³⁷ By early 1961, the number of Greeks leaving Egypt had quadrupled compared to previous years.³⁸

34 Editorial, 'Η Εβδομάς Νάσερ εις την Ελλάδα', *Ταχυδρόμος*, 6 June 1960.

35 See *Ταχυδρόμος*, 7–11 June 1960, and Y. Terencio, 'Εντυπώσεις των Αθηναίων από τον Πρόεδρον Νάσερ', 8 July.

36 See *Ταχυδρόμος*, 10 June, and the editorial 'Αδελφικά συναντήηεις', 11 June 1960.

37 Cairo to Foreign Office, 22 September 1960, TNA/FO 371/152969/8; Cairo to Foreign Office, 6 January 1961, TNA/FO 371/160195/1; Daratzikis, *Διπλωματικές σημειώσεις*, 124; Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt*, 202–3 and 204–6.

38 Greek Memorandum to the UAR government, attached to Lambros to Foreign Ministry 10 August 1961, APA/8.

Byron Theodoropoulos reports: the July 1961 measures

In mid-July 1961, the new Greek consul-general in Alexandria, Byron Theodoropoulos, reported to the Cairo Embassy on the decline of the city's Greek community. Echoing the assumptions of Greek diplomacy since 1957, Theodoropoulos did not attribute this to Egyptian ill-will, but instead to a redistribution of power throughout the country: 'what is pushing us out of Egypt is the unavoidable economic and social evolution of the country. We can neither suspend this evolution nor expect that the Egyptians will slow it down for our sake.'³⁹ Theodoropoulos continued to refer to a *gradual* flight of the community. The Egyptian press offered a similar picture. In early July, Alexandria's *Tachydromos* reported on the fears of an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the end of classes in the various community schools. On 21 July (when it also carried the first reports about extensive nationalizations), it extensively covered the opening of the offices of the Arab-Greek League in Cairo, considering it as a hopeful sign. The community did not expect to receive the blow of the 'Socialist Laws'.⁴⁰

The Socialist Laws were proclaimed on the ninth anniversary of the 1952 Egyptian 'revolution'. They were not directed against foreigners; they provided for the nationalization of a huge part (almost two-thirds) of private interests in the country, and have been described as the 'demise of private enterprise' in the country⁴¹ and as the 'final destruction of private initiative' by 'deep seated ideological drives and political ambition'.⁴² It is telling that, together with the enactment of these laws, Cairo suspended the work of the Stock Exchange for two months in order to prevent panic. The new decrees further limited private ownership of land to half, and substantially increased taxes on urban property as well as on income; they provided for the distribution of a quarter of the profits of the enterprises to the employees who would also participate in the management; and set a very low limit to the value of shares that a person could own. The laws stated that fifty per cent of the capital of enterprises exporting cotton should be owned by the Egyptian state; and fully nationalized those enterprises possessing cotton presses. The banks and the insurance companies were being nationalized. The Greek employees of the companies earmarked for nationalization (in whole or in part) were poor people who, after losing their jobs, would have no other option but to leave the country:

...we are faced by a multitude of measures on a huge scale, and there is the danger, if the Greeks do not remain in their positions, that the already existing current of migration will assume the proportions of a refugee wave. The psychological condition of the community is such that even if no immediate dismissals take place, migration will significantly increase.⁴³

39 Quoted in Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt*, 201.

40 *Ταχυδρόμος*, 3, 4, 18, 20 and 21 July 1961.

41 O'Brien, *The Revolution in Egypt's Economic System*.

42 Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism*, 157.

43 Giannakakis (Cairo Consulate) to Cairo Embassy, 25 July, and Lambros to Foreign Ministry, 27 July 1961, APA/8. For a discussion of the new laws and their impact upon the Egyptians, see also Sakkas,

As Ambassador Lambros was experiencing health problems, Theodoropoulos now came forward to draw a comprehensive picture. He noted that the 1957 Egyptianization could perhaps be explained by the popular need to achieve economic independence. However, in 1961, the socialization measures did not correspond to a comparable popular feeling against the private sector that was being targeted and eradicated. The Nasserist regime had shown strong hostility towards private initiative and sought constant expansion of the public sector, from foreign exchange controls to the control of foreign trade, then of the banks, consumption and production: 'Directed economies rarely evade this vicious circle', Theodoropoulos noted. On the other hand, he added, it was possible that political aims (for example, the need to avoid Soviet control of Egyptian foreign trade) played a role in the decision to adopt these measures. He was very pessimistic about the future of the Egyptian economy and doubted that the Egyptian state would be able to administer such big enterprises.⁴⁴ Moreover, the whole venture had been undertaken hastily and with poor preparation, and the measures represented a drastic U-turn compared to previous policies: a few months earlier, the government had propagated the buying of Egyptian bonds by private individuals, the negotiation of which it now forbade; it had encouraged the Egyptian private sector to buy the Egyptianized banks, which it now nationalized. Theodoropoulos noted that Minister Ali Sabri was regarded as the mastermind behind the new policy, but other high-ranking personalities of the regime had been kept in the dark before its proclamation. This was hardly a reassuring picture.⁴⁵

The consul-general stressed that, since the Greeks were the only remaining foreign community, 'Greek capital is essentially the only foreign capital that the measures affect.' Moreover, the measures involved extensive expropriations of Greek landed properties, including property belonging to the community of Alexandria. The huge taxes on urban properties meant that the income of the owners, as well as the value of the remaining properties, would diminish. 'The big disaster took place in Alexandria', Theodoropoulos lamented, and this placed 'the whole problem of the Alexandria community on a new basis'.⁴⁶

He noted that the repercussions could also be traced in the fields of capital, employment and communal organization. Many Greek enterprises were being nationalized in whole or in part; their owners were to be compensated by state bonds, which however would be cashed in after fifteen years and with an interest rate of 4%, whereas the shares of these companies were currently yielding 8 to 10%. The distribution of a quarter of the profits to the employees and the new heavy taxes were

'Greece and the mass exodus of the Egyptian Greeks'; and the sub-chapter 'Flight from Egypt' in Kitroeff, *The Greeks and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Kitroeff notes that, unlike the 1957 Egyptianization measures, the 1961 laws 'left little room for the Greeks to maneuver'.

44 Theodoropoulos (Alexandria) to Cairo Embassy, no. 740, 24 July 1961, AA/8.

45 Theodoropoulos to Cairo Embassy, no. 747, 26 July, and 28 July 1961, APA/8.

46 Theodoropoulos to Cairo Embassy, nos. 745, 746 and 748, 26 July 1961, APA/8.

a further burden upon Greek businessmen. Moreover, the value of the nationalized capital (which would determine the value of the bonds to be issued for compensation), would be estimated by state officials alone, something which allowed, at least, for some doubt as to the accuracy of their estimations; and, when the Stock Exchange resumed its activities, there would be so many bonds for sale that their value would practically be annulled. Taking into account the fact that many Greeks, even those of limited means, had invested in bonds of the nationalized companies, the effect upon the community was devastating. The factories earmarked for nationalization had already been taken over by state officials, in some cases without a proper census, and the Greek shareholders, even if they *formally* appeared to be owners of fifty per cent of the enterprise, had been effectively deprived of the management. Regarding employment, Theodoropoulos continued, the state was reluctant to grant licences for work to the Greeks even before the new laws: 'It is no exaggeration to expect that we will witness the gradual dismissal of all those Greek employees who can be replaced by locals.' Last but not least, the income of the Greek foundations – from cultural clubs to schools – was coming mostly from private contributions which would stop after these heavy blows to the private sector. There was even doubt as to whether the Alexandria community was economically viable; the selling of its property would not solve the problem since its value was now falling; some of the community leaders even debated whether it should be dissolved. Theodoropoulos did not spare his words:

The prevailing feeling among the members of the community, wealthy and poor, is that they are waging a futile struggle. I am afraid that this feeling is based on the irrefutable fact that in a socialist co-operative economy, such as the one created in the UAR, the private sector can have no place. Consequently, the Greeks, who are part of this private sector, are being pushed out by the new form of the economy. It is little consolation that the new measures are not directed only against foreigners but mostly have an impact on the Egyptians themselves.

Theodoropoulos had served in Istanbul, where the Greek community had received significant blows from the 'varlık' (wealth) tax during the 1940s to the anti-Greek pogrom of 1955. However, as he noted, the Istanbul Greeks had not been denied the opportunity to continue their economic activities, as was the case with the socialization measures; the exodus was now inevitable.⁴⁷ Athens should negotiate with Cairo in order to ensure the payment of compensation. Greece should also prepare for the reception of many Egyptians in Greece.⁴⁸

It is telling that the Egyptians expressed their despair to the Greek diplomats, but could not do so in public. The Alexandrian *Tachydromos* merely reported on the provisions of the Socialist Laws (which signalled, as it noted, 'the liberation from the

47 Theodoropoulos to Cairo Embassy, no. 745, 26 July 1961, APA/8.

48 Theodoropoulos to Cairo Embassy, no date (copy) and attached notes, APA/8.

dictatorship of the capital'), and for days devoted the largest part of its front page to the celebrations of the ninth anniversary of the 'revolution'. On 26 July, *Tachydromos* welcomed the UAR President in Alexandria, proclaiming that the Alexandrian Greeks were 'willing soldiers of the aims of the Revolution [... they were] moved by the fact that their city had been chosen by Divine Providence to become the pivot of this great effort of rehabilitation'.⁴⁹

Averoff's visit to Cairo, August 1961

In response to these developments, the Greek foreign minister paid a hurried visit to Egypt on 5–9 August 1961. The visit took place at a difficult period in international affairs: the Berlin Wall was built three days after Averoff's return from Cairo; in the same month, Nikita Khrushchev proclaimed his well-known threat that if Greece accepted US intermediate-range missiles, Soviet missiles 'would spare neither the olive trees nor the Acropolis'; the founding conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (in which Egypt played a prominent role) took place in Belgrade in the following month, while at the end of September the union of Egypt and Syria in the UAR was dissolved. This was hardly a moment when the Greeks could exercise much leverage on the Egyptians.

Averoff arrived in Cairo on the night of 5 August, together with Dimitrios Kosmadopoulos, the director of his diplomatic office, and Ambassador Dimitrios Poubouras, the director of the Middle Eastern department of the Foreign Ministry; both diplomats had served in Alexandria. Averoff's arrival in Cairo gave the opportunity to the Egyptian daily *Tachydromos* to make the first public reference to the anxieties of the community: Averoff mentioned these in his interview, which the newspaper was able to publish as the remark of a foreign statesman. Indeed, *Tachydromos* now referred to the expected help of the Greek government to the Egyptians *migrating to Greece*, and especially the hope that Athens would abolish the tax on the migrants' furniture. These clearly reflected the psychology of a mass exodus.⁵⁰

On 6 August, Averoff met the leaders of the Greek communities of Cairo and Alexandria. He then cabled to Karamanlis that the local Greek leaders were discussing departure from Egypt: 'Without creating false impressions, I tried to boost their morale'.⁵¹ On the same day, Averoff met his Egyptian counterpart and old acquaintance, Mahmoud Fawzi. He asked that Egypt respect the law allowing some Greek employees to remain in their posts; Greece and Egypt should conclude an agreement on the compensation of the nationalized companies (this would guarantee that compensations would be paid, as it was improbable that the Greek businessmen would remain in Egypt for fifteen years); the value of companies that were not being

49 *Tachydromos*, 23–29 July 1961

50 *Tachydromos*, 6 and 7 August 1961.

51 Averoff (Cairo) to Karamanlis, no. 7425, 6 August 1961, KA/16A.

negotiated in the Stock Exchange should be estimated with the participation of their owners, not one-sidedly by Egyptian officials. Fawzi appeared positive regarding the first issue but was reserved on the rest.⁵²

The next day, Averoff went to Alexandria, where the Greeks were desperate: as he cabled to Karamanlis, ‘they insist that all – repeat all – will depart, including small businessmen and workers’.⁵³ He then met el-Safei and repeated the request to protect the Greeks working in the country.⁵⁴ On the 8th, el-Safei and Mohieddin accepted the request for the Greek employees (Athens merely asked for the strict implementation of the existing law), and noted that the other Greek requests would be examined by Nasser himself.⁵⁵

Averoff was received by Nasser on 9 August. He reminded the UAR leader of Greek support for the Arabs in many previous instances. Averoff did not dispute Cairo’s right to take measures; he merely wanted Nasser to facilitate the transfer of the activities of the Greek businessmen to Greece and to ensure that they would be compensated. Nasser assured Averoff that the Greek employees of the nationalized companies would not be dismissed, since their numbers conformed to the law. He accepted in principle that those who wanted to leave the country would have the right to receive compensation. Averoff proposed the setting up of a mixed committee which would draw up a bilateral agreement on the payment of compensation. It was clear that the Greek side was striving to involve state authorities in this process, but Nasser again evaded the subject: he noted that a Greek–Egyptian deal should not become a precedent for the cases of nationals of other countries. Nasser accepted the Greek request that the branches of Greek banks be exempted from immediate nationalization.⁵⁶

Averoff’s visit merely aimed to make sure that the Greeks leaving Egypt would be properly compensated – although Greek diplomacy knew very well that in these cases the phrase ‘proper compensation’ meant different things to the Foreign Ministries and to the persons affected. The very fact that the two states agreed to discuss the compensation of businessmen who *would no longer be present in the country* meant that all parties involved recognized that the exodus would be accelerated.

After the visit, the UAR government announced that it would allow the sale of shares and bonds of the partially nationalized companies up to the sum of 1,000 Egyptian pounds; the banks would also grant loans of up to 5,000 pounds, an important issue for small businessmen. As Theodoropoulos noted, these were positive measures but they failed to ease the anxieties of the local Greeks. Indeed, the latter had lost all confidence in the state: it was not possible to know how the banks would apply the provisions for loans, and no one trusted the authorities who would estimate the

52 Averoff to Karamanlis, no. 7425b, 6 August 1961, KA/16A.

53 Averoff to Karamanlis, no. 791, 7 August 1961, KA/16A.

54 Lambros to Foreign Ministry, no 7461, 10 August 1961, APA/8.

55 Averoff to Foreign Ministry, 8 August 1961, APA/8.

56 Lambros to Foreign Ministry, no. 7461, 10 August, and no. 7461b, 11 August 1961, APA/8.

amount of compensations. Moreover, Theodoropoulos continued, the state authorities, when taking control of the nationalized businesses, displayed a profoundly bureaucratic and hostile mentality, and strove to find problems; the banks no longer provided mortgages to the Greeks, in order to prevent the money being channelled abroad (in these conditions, a mortgage could function as an effective sale, albeit at lower prices). Theodoropoulos stressed that 'the psychological condition of the [Alexandria] community is not far from uncontrolled panic'.⁵⁷

In late August, new arrests of Alexandrian Greeks on charges of espionage further burdened the climate. A desperate Theodoropoulos noted that the death of one arrested Greek and the maltreatment of another during their interrogation by the police had terrified the Greek community even more. Theodoropoulos also pointed to another serious mistake by the Greek side: the publication in *Messenger d'Athènes*, of a letter from the Alexandria community to Karamanlis, in which the community asked the prime minister to harden his attitude towards Nasser. The letter was disclaimed by both the community and the Greek government, but the damage had been done.⁵⁸

New measures against the 'rich' were adopted by Cairo in September 1961; a number of Greeks were among those whose property was sequestered, and this prompted the British Embassy in Athens to report that the episode marked 'the continuing failure of the Greek Government's policy of wooing Nasser in order to secure a special position for the Greek community in Egypt'.⁵⁹ As Theodoropoulos told his British counterpart in November 1961, the Socialist Laws had marked the turning point for the exodus of the Greek community: its numerical strength had decreased by fifteen per cent since school opening of the past year, and 'the vast majority had left since 26 July'.⁶⁰ This was also the picture that the British Embassy in Greece painted in its annual review for 1961:

The penniless refugees from Egypt, who have poured into Greece during the year, mark the total failure of the policy of securing a special position for the Greek community, thereby cultivating friendly relations with President Nasser'.⁶¹

In the following years, new arrests and trials of Greeks trying to smuggle their funds out of Egypt made things worse,⁶² although it is difficult to see what else they could have done in a state that persecuted wealth. By 1963, new nationalizations took place which affected ownership of land by foreigners, as well as thirty-eight companies under Greek ownership, while the closing down of the Stock Exchange also resulted in many

57 Theodoropoulos to Cairo Embassy, 14 and 19 August 1961, APA/ 8.

58 Theodoropoulos to Cairo Embassy, 21 and 24 August 1961, APA/8.

59 Athens to Foreign Office, 16 November 1961, TNA/FO 371/160410/3.

60 Dundas to Duck (Cairo), 3 November 1961, TNA/FO 371/158866/1.

61 Curle (Athens) to Home, 1 January 1962, Greece: annual report for 1961, TNA/FO 371/163442/1.

62 Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt*, 170–1.

Greeks losing their employment. By the mid-1960s, only 30,000 Greeks remained in Egypt and their number kept falling; in 1966, Greece and Egypt concluded an agreement on the payment of compensation following the 1961 nationalizations, which, as usual with similar agreements internationally, did not meet the expectations of the Egyptians for high compensation.⁶³

Conclusions

A large part of the available bibliography on the expulsion of the Greeks from Egypt focuses upon the social history of the community, as well as upon its deep political and social divisions, and engages in heated discussions about who should be blamed for their demise – Nasser or the Egyptian leadership, who had failed to overcome their colonialist prejudices and adjust to the new nationalist Egypt, contrary to what the Egyptian Left advocated. The present author does not intend to address this discussion. He agrees with the interpretation of Sophianos Chrysostomidis that a larger historical process had been set in motion: a wider redistribution of power throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East was taking place. Steadily, since 1952, but in particular after 1956, Nasser seemed to make a distinction between Greece's pro-Arab policy, on the one hand, and the Egyptians, on the other; he clearly perceived the latter as a remnant of colonialism and as an integral part of the Western influences that he wanted to eradicate from his country. Cairo's priorities were shaped by its nationalist, rather than by its 'socialist', ideology. However, 'nationalist', in the Middle East of that era, referred not only to international conduct but also to an internal, 'anti-capitalist' transformation of Egyptian society. Nasser's freedom of manoeuvre was not unlimited: as the Greek Embassy recognized in 1958, 'bred by Arab nationalism, Gamal Abdel Nasser today is not merely its main animator, but to some extent also its hostage'.⁶⁴ In other words, the destruction of the Greek community was collateral damage in a process of huge proportions, involving economies, societies, ideologies, minorities and the exercise of power in the post-imperial Eastern Mediterranean.

Thus, the flight of the Greeks from Egypt was part of the transition of the region formerly known as the 'Near East' (or the 'Levant') from imperial governance to the era of the nation-states. The latter, especially those with a 'socialist' disposition (like Nasserite Egypt), strove to nationalize their economies and societies at any cost. Essentially, the same occurred with the effective expulsion of the Greek community from Turkey, from the harsh policies implemented by the Kemalists in the 1920s to the 'varlık' tax of the 1940s, the 1955 pogrom and the final 'surgical strike' of 1964, when Ankara annulled the bilateral Treaty on Residence, and terrified both the Greek

63 Soulogiannis, *Η θέση των Ελλήνων στην Αίγυπτο*; Daratzikis, *Διπλωματικές σημειώσεις*, 137–50; Sakkas, *Η Ελλάδα, το Κυπριακό και ο αραβικός κόσμος*, 97–101; Sakkas, 'Greece and the mass exodus of the Egyptian Greeks'.

64 Pilavakis (Cairo) to Foreign Ministry, 8 October 1958, APA/ 5.

nationals whom it deported and those Greeks with Turkish citizenship who also left.⁶⁵ Both the Istanbul Greeks and the Egyptians were urban populations, who could be easily terrified by state action and forced to flee. During these processes, human rights played little role. The Greek communities of the Eastern Mediterranean were the remnants of an older age. It would perhaps be an exaggeration to argue that their expulsion was inevitable. However, it was very difficult for them to survive in this region and in this era – especially because they were perceived, rightly or wrongly, in Istanbul, Alexandria or elsewhere, as ‘agents’ of the Western powers, against which the independence of the regional states had to be asserted.

In a process of such gigantic proportions, Greek foreign policy – the subject of this article – failed to achieve its objectives. Scholars have noted that after 1957, especially following Karamanlis’ visit to Cairo, Athens was successful in persuading a willing Nasser to make gestures of good will and contain the flight of the Egyptians.⁶⁶ Athens strove to delay the demise of the Egyptian community; but the developments of 1961 were a violent and radical reversal that delivered a fatal blow – exactly what Athens had tried to avert in the previous years. There is also the view that Law 19/59 on employment was the real turning point rather than the July 1961 Socialist Laws.⁶⁷ Although the 1959 law did accelerate the pace of departures, both the Greek and the British diplomatic services did not regard this as the crucial turning point; instead, they immediately painted the picture of a devastating, irreversible blow that the 1961 Socialist Laws dealt to the community.

The intricacies of Greek policy towards Nasserist Egypt are interesting on several levels. During the 1956 Suez crisis, the British described Greek policy as ‘hostage’ to the Egyptians. Subsequent research has disputed this interpretation. It is true that the position of the Egyptians had been a major motive behind Greece’s pro-Arab policy since 1947.⁶⁸ However, scholars have noted that there was genuine sympathy on the part of Greek officials for Egypt’s quest for independence and development, even if Athens disagreed with Cairo’s international policies.⁶⁹ On the other hand, in a schizophrenic manner not unusual in Greek political history, within Greece itself, the pro-Western Greek political forces – supposedly, ‘hostages’ to Nasser – represented a worldview opposite to ‘Nasserism’ and neutralism which were the preferences of the Greek Left. The best public manifestation of this trend was offered by the leading Centrist intellectual, Giorgos Theotokas, in a 1958 fictional political ‘dialogue’ between the prudent ancient Athenian General Nicias (who stood for the pro-Western

65 See mostly, A. Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek–Turkish Relations, 1918–1974* (Athens 1983).

66 Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt*, 67–9; Kazamias, ‘The “purge of the Greeks”’, 18.

67 Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt*, 202–3.

68 See among others, Koumas, ‘Greece and the Palestinian question’.

69 Hatzivassiliou, ‘Greece and the Arabs’; Y. Sakkas, ‘Η ελληνική πολιτική στη Μέση Ανατολή επί κυβερνήσεων Κωνσταντίνου Καραμανλή’, in Svolopoulos, Botsiou and Hatzivassiliou (eds.), *Karamanlis in the Twentieth Century*, II, 348–363.

political forces), and the populist leader Cleon, arguing for a neutralist stance. Nicias projected Theotokas' central thesis:

But they [the Arabs] are still in the stage of extreme hyper-nationalism, of autarky, of religious fanaticism, of intolerance. They like us because we confront the English [on Cyprus] who are their own overlords. What else can the Greeks expect from them, Cleon? ... Because I have come to a conflict with the Anglo-Saxons, I will not sacrifice our Greek future lightly. If needed, I will look elsewhere to find shelter. There are in the West other big nations who are closer to us, geographically and psychologically, nations with which I hope that the ideal of a democratic Europe will unite us one day. This is where our salvation lies, Cleon: in Europe.⁷⁰

Of course, Greece's European option was a goal of long standing and was not shaped because of the specific experience of the Egyptians. However, as Theotokas implied, the Eastern Mediterranean experiences of the early post-war period were clearly important in cementing the determination of Athens to pursue a course of integration in the West. It was interesting that one specific Greek diplomat seemed to be marked out to live through and report these devastations. Byron Theodoropoulos was consul in Istanbul in September 1955 at the time of the anti-Greek pogrom;⁷¹ a few years later, as consul-general in Alexandria, he witnessed the blow to the Alexandrian Greeks; he then headed the Turkish department of the Foreign Ministry in the mid-1960s, when fatal blows were dealt to the Istanbul Greeks. However, Theodoropoulos was much more than an acute observer of Eastern Mediterranean tragedies. He subsequently rose to become a pivotal personality in Greek diplomacy, arguably the most prominent diplomat in the history of the modern Greek state: in the 1970s, he served as Permanent Representative to NATO and then as the Secretary-General of the Foreign Ministry. In his latter capacity, he led Greek diplomacy to its most important success, the conclusion of the Treaty of Accession to the European Communities in 1979. Theodoropoulos left active service in 1981 but, until his death in 2010, went on to write numerous books on foreign policy. He was both a prominent practitioner and a theoretician of his craft.

The experience of those Eastern Mediterranean events shaped the younger, post-war generation of Greek diplomats, among whom were Theodoropoulos and other pivotal people such as Petros Molyviatis, Efstathios Lagakos, Menelaos Alexandrakis, Ioannis Tzounis, Michael Doundas, as well as slightly older men, such as Kosmadopoulos, who accompanied Averoff in the desperate trip to Cairo in 1961, or Dimitris Bitsios, the director-general of the Foreign Ministry who went to Egypt with Minister Stratos

70 G. Theotokas, 'Μεταξύ Ανατολής–Δύσεως' (1958), in G. Theotokas, *Στοχασμοί και θέσεις: πολιτικά κείμενα, 1925–1966*, II (Athens 1996) 839–41.

71 His report of the September 1955 pogrom was published in K. Sarioglou and E. Sarioglou-Scott (eds.), *Πενήντα χρόνια από τα Σεπτεμβριανά* (Athens 2012).

in 1960, and became the Foreign Minister of 1974–7.⁷² In the 1950s and 1960s, these persons witnessed the destruction of the Greek communities in an Eastern Mediterranean dominated by nationalism, anti-colonialism and anti-Westernism, pseudo-Socialist proclamations, bureaucracy and tariffs, all accompanied by economic failure. However, other trends were surfacing: in early July 1961, days before the publication of the Egyptian Socialist Laws, Greece had signed its Treaty of Association with the European Economic Community (EEC). This agreement pointed to a different world, involving modernization, economic development and accession to one of the hard cores of the West. The European option seemed to be working much better than the effort to retain fragments of the Greek presence in a ‘Levant’ that was no longer there. Greece, of course, would always be a part of the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, this new generation of Greek diplomats, who lived through these pressures, tragedies and opportunities, were the people who finally brought the country into the EEC and turned it into a full member of the developed world.

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou is professor of Post-war History at the University of Athens, and the secretary-general of the Foundation of the Greek Parliament for Democracy and Parliamentarism. He has studied Greek foreign policy, the history of NATO and the Cold War international system.

72 In his memoirs concerning his ministerial term, during which Greece started its accession negotiations with the EEC, Bitsios insisted on the country’s Western identity; he praised the aim of the Arabs to secure an international position of ‘dignity, respect and influence’, but distanced himself markedly from ‘the personal ambitions of Arab leaders to monopolize the leadership of the Arab movement, the outbreaks of nationalism in one or another part of the Arab world’. See D. Bitsios, *Πέρα από τα σύνορα* (Athens 1983) 150.