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### **Why is the West Sacrificing Cyprus on the Turkish Altar?**

By E. G. Vallianatos

War and Cultural Heritage: Cyprus after the 1974 Turkish Invasion. By Michael Jansen. Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs, University of Minnesota, 2005. 92 pages. \$ 30.

An International Relations Debacle: The UN Secretary-General's Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus 1999-2004. By Claire Palley. Oxford and Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing, 2005. 395 pages. \$ 45.

The books under review examine how Turkey is taking advantage of the West to continue its plunder and domination of Cyprus. These books are telling a story of tragedy in Cyprus, itself a symptom of the declining state of Western civilization.

On 16 May 2006, I heard Michael Jansen lecture on the Turkish plunder of Cypriot antiquities. The objective of the lecture, which took place on Capitol Hill, was to enlighten the indifferent American political class to the destructive consequences of being in bed with Turkey, an enemy of the Greeks and Western civilization.

The lecturer, Jansen, an experienced American reporter writing for the Irish Times, did not pretend he was lecturing us on an issue that had a beginning and an end, much less an easy solution. The Embassy of Cyprus was sponsoring Jansen who had just published a report on the fate of the Cypriot Greek culture in northern Cyprus since 1974, the year the Turks invaded and captured a third of Cyprus.

“War and Cultural Heritage: Cyprus after the 1974 Turkish Invasion” is a scholarly and personal examination of the brutal plunder of Cyprus in our time, a war against the Greek culture and people of Cyprus. Jansen speaks of the “looting and destruction” of the cultural heritage of Cyprus. It is that – and much more.

What impressed me listening to her Capitol Hill lecture and reading her book was her honesty. The destruction of the monuments of culture in northern Cyprus made a difference in her life. That is one reason why she

writes so well: her whole being got involved in her work, which documents and denounces that destruction. The other reason her book is so interesting and memorable is that she is an outstanding writer.

Tomb robbing is probably the second oldest profession. Humans express their hatred against their enemies with the looting and destruction of whatever is left after the annihilation or slavery of those enemies.

Once the Turks were through with their bloody 1974 invasion and capture of northern Cyprus, looters, smugglers, thieves, and the “international art mafia” started pilfering the 13-millennia-old Greek cultural heritage of Cyprus. Stolen works of art found themselves in secret homes in Munich and Berlin in Germany and the art markets of London, ending in American and European private collections.

According to Jansen, the agents of that cultural genocide include Turks, above all, as well as Greek Cypriots and thieves and merchants from the top museums of Europe and America, including UN officials. For example, in 1979, one of the thieves of Cypriot antiquities was the Austrian-born prince Alfred zur Lippe-Weidenfeld, a friend of the UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim and representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Cyprus. Officers of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also suppressed critical reports of the Turkish plunder.

Jansen interviewed some of those thieves so her story, at times, reads like a mystery novel: how gangsters plan and execute a crime. Most of what she reports zeros in on the Turks’ plunder of churches, cutting out the extraordinarily beautiful and, sometimes, ancient frescoes from the walls of the destroyed churches, and the trade in the stolen icons. She also recounts how the Church of Cyprus is using legal challenges and money in (1) discouraging the trade in the art from churches under Turkish occupation; and (2) buying back the stolen treasures from northern Cyprus.

Jansen also says that the Turks are causing inestimable damage to the pre-Christian history of the 13-millennia-old island of Cyprus. There are illegal digs and the perpetual robbery of tombs and ancient monuments, which not only disrupts Cyprus’ extremely ancient civilization but also defiles Western culture.

As long as Greece remains impotent, incapable or unwilling to throw Turkey out of Cyprus, and as long as the international “community” and, especially, Western Europe and America tolerate the violent and criminal occupation of northern Cyprus by Turkey, the looting and destruction of Cyprus’ patrimony will continue.

The best artifacts of the Turks’ plunder of Cyprus end up in Western private collections and museums. Jansen says that Britain is “the hub of the European trade in antiquities.” Without that option, without the huge sums thieves earn by robbing tombs and churches, there would be little if any systematic cultural looting of the antiquities of Cyprus. The Turks would have made many Cypriot churches, as they have already done, into stables and mosques. Or, out of revenge, they would probably wreck many of them, as they have already done, or convert them into property for their use.

In my estimation, the moving flame behind the cultural plunder of Cyprus, and all other plunder of Greek antiquities is the envy of rich institutions and persons in the West who like to surround themselves by the ancient products of Greek culture. They know that Greek art is incomparable in beauty, the model of all Western art. And since they cannot create even Greek-like culture, much less Greek culture, they resort to robbing it from its rightful owners, the Greeks of Greece and Cyprus.

Aydin Dikmen, perhaps the most successful of the Turks in the illicit trade of Cypriot antiquities, is a petty thief compared to Luigi Palma di Cesnola, a US consul in Larnaca, Cyprus from 1865 to 1876. This American diplomat pillaged Cyprus on a grand scale. He managed to excavate and sell more than 100,000 Cypriot archaeological pieces. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York “bought” 35,000 of those stolen artifacts from di Cesnola.

Jansen’s timely and thoughtful book is an introduction and a case study to this grand looting of culture. War is terrible for all living things. But war is also a great opportunity for the industrialization of cultural robbery, as is the case with the Turkish conquest of northern Cyprus. Jansen’s book is a reminder of how delicate and corrupt the edifice of the West has become – allowing a Moslem country with a documented history of hatred for Greek and Western civilization to continue to provoke and destroy the essence of what brought Greek and Western civilization into being.

More evidence of this corruption comes from Claire Palley's book, "An International Relations Debacle." On the surface this book is about the efforts of a small but powerful group of UN experts (Secretariat) working for Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, to find a solution to the Cyprus problem. The author, Claire Palley, a British lawyer and legal scholar, advised the president of Cyprus for 25 years. Her report is not a typical bureaucratic or diplomatic account. It is rather a personal, pro-Cyprus story based on intimate knowledge and understanding of the main actors and events in the recent tragic history of Cyprus, especially the role the Secretariat played from 1999 to 2004 in its advocacy of a pro-Turkish policy in order to put "a Cyprus settlement in place."

The Secretariat manufactured this pro-Turkish policy with its briefings and reports, which did two things. They misled the international community and, second, they put the tiny Republic of Cyprus under tremendous pressure to self-destruct by accepting as inevitable and legitimate the aggression of Turkey. Cyprus, of course, refused to self-destruct.

The consequences of the Secretariat's taking sides, what Palley describes as "an unhappy episode in international relations," are bad for the reputation of the UN and for future UN efforts to be of help to Cyprus or in resolving political crises in other countries. The Greek Cypriots, who had faith in the UN for four decades, have been particularly disheartened with the bias of the Secretariat. That's why On April 24, 2004 the Greek Cypriots rejected Annan V, the fifth version of the Secretariat's Plan for a "United Cyprus Republic." On June 7, 2004, the president of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, complained to Kofi Annan that the Secretariat's Plan provided immediate benefits to the Turkish Cypriots but leaves the Greek Cypriots at the mercy of Turkey, a country not friendly to them. Papadopoulos was particularly bitter because of the failure of the UN Plan to guarantee that Cypriot Greeks could recover their property and land in northern Cyprus and for the years it would take for the Turkish army to reduce its size under the agreement.

Cypriot Greeks also have been concerned with Turkey's insistence it has a unilateral right to send its armies to Cyprus, claiming, falsely, that Article IV of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee is the source for its aggressive attitude. So Papadopoulos told Kofi Annan it would be imprudent for the Greek Cypriots to rely on Turkey's good will. The Greeks were convinced the UN proposed settlement was "blatantly unjust, uncertain of application and full of grave risks for the future."

Not only did UN officials manipulate international opinion in favor of the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, wishing to erase Turkey's bloody invasion and occupation of northern Cyprus, but threatened the Greek Cypriots with dire consequences precisely because they had exercised their democratic right in rejecting the biased UN Plan. The Secretariat's revenge found expression in its May 28, 2004 report: that the Turks' pseudo-state in the conquered territory, the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, should be given all the support and attributes of an independent country, thus legitimizing Turkey's fruits of aggression. This report, of course, remains silent about the 119,000 illegal Turkish settlers, the 35,000 troops Turkey maintains in northern Cyprus or that Turkey appropriated 36.4 percent of Cyprus.

Such behavior, well documented in Palley's outstanding, timely, and lavishly illustrated book, undermines international relations, weakening the machinery of conflict resolution, while sowing seeds for further trouble. And, of course, the dishonest policies of the Secretariat solidify the aggression of the Turks, convincing them that, in fact, might is right, a barbarous concept of long standing.

The British and US governments, meanwhile, worked behind the Secretariat, shaping its pro-Turkish policies, thinking nothing of the horrific injustice of the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, while boosting Turkey's ominous ambitions.

These policies continued a long-standing anti-Greek Cypriot tradition. England brought Turkey to Cyprus in 1955 to become the wrecking crew among the Cypriot Greeks. England simply had to have its pound of flesh because the Cypriot Greeks resisted British colonialism and, later, fought England for their freedom. Fifty years later, England continued with its subversion of Cyprus by activating Turkey. The US did the same thing. America is pathologically connected to Turkey through the cold war and the military alliance of NATO. This included America's approval of Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus. America has also had the delusion Turkish Islam is amenable to democracy and Western values. The Moslem attack of 11 September 2001 against America colored Cyprus even more because now the US is fighting a war against Iraq, wanting Turkey on its side, so sacrificing Greek Cyprus was small potatoes. America also wanted Turkey to join the European Union, in which case Turkey ought to look good, that

is, one had to clean up Turkey's atrocities against Cyprus, a member of the European Union.

This is the picture emerging from Palley's pioneering study, shedding light onto the suffering of the Cypriot people. The corrupt politics of England and America corrupt the UN and prop Turkish aggression, diminishing hopes for a just settlement of the grievances between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus. It is this international lawlessness that allows, nay encourages, plunder of northern Cyprus. One feeds on the other.

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