



French troops pictured outside requisitioned homes in Kavos in early 1918. With them is a local child from a nearby home.

KASTELLORIZO, 1921: 'BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS'¹

by Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney

On 1 March 1921, in an event that was to forever shape the modern history of Kastellorizo, France surrendered all her rights and interests in Kastellorizo to Italy. France had been in occupation of the small, yet strategically important, island for just over five years, but those years were to be imprinted with the horrors of modern warfare for a resident population that numbered a mere 3,000 people when the French first planted their flag in December 1915.

Nevertheless, the day of handover to Italy was not to be without its fair share of pomp. The French admiral, **Charles Mornet**, delivered an impassioned farewell speech to the assembled islanders, thanking them for the sacrifices they had made in the allied cause. Conscious that earlier French promises regarding union with Greece were not to be fulfilled, he exhorted the Kastellorizians to submit to Italian rule 'avec bonne grace'. But his comments did little to soothe the bitterness many felt about France's hasty departure.

Sensing his audience's disappointment, Mornet spontaneously offered the locals what he termed the 'greatest gift', the last French flag to fly over the island. Sadly, he reported some days later, 'even that' was not enough to mollify his listeners' disappointment.

While local resentment was undoubtedly fuelled by a long-held yearning for union with Greece, there were more immediate reasons for disquiet in the aftermath of a brutal war. Houses had been destroyed and lives lost in the bombardments of 1917 and 1918, and some two years after the war's end, little had been provided by way of compensation. Equally riling was that many Kastellorizians had yet to be remunerated for services they had rendered towards the allied war effort, with most of them disappointed that the French were departing while such matters were still in abeyance.

Unbeknownst to them, the departing French had already struck up a secret deal with the Italians by which the latter



Another photograph of French naval personnel outside requisitioned homes in Kavos in early 1918.

agreed to meet all claims in exchange for the military installations and other improvements the French were leaving behind. So, in June 1921, the island's Italian *delegáto* (or local governor), **Franco Quentin**, called for claims to be submitted from those who had rendered services to the French forces between December 1915 to November 1918. A special commission was established, presided over by the regime's head of administrative services, **Ludovico De Angelis**, and comprising two locals, mayor **Ioannis Lakerdis** (now re-named 'Giovanni' rather than 'Jean', his preferred first name under the French) and his deputy, **Agapitos Xanthís**. Their task was to assess each claim and award compensation that was commensurate with the services provided or damage suffered.

Claims were swiftly submitted and they make for fascinating reading, constituting as they do a veritable window into daily life in those frantic years. A number of the applicants were those whose homes or business premises had been requisitioned for use by the French. **Lakerdis** may have been one of the adjudicators, but he was also one of the primary applicants. His was a claim for 27 months' rental for his home in the 'piazza mercato', the square known locally as 'Mesi tou Yialou' where the memorial to the unknown soldier now stands.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, **Lakerdis**' claim was approved in full (1,000 lire²), but so too were similar, albeit smaller, claims by **Yeorgios Hatsatouris** (his home had been used as a kitchen and mess for non-commissioned officers - 500 lire), **Theodosios Yiarakous** (a requisitioned house on the 'prokyméa' - 100 lire) and shipowner **Nikolaos Finikiotis**, whose home in Kavos' upper laneways had been transformed into an auxiliary hospital when casualties from the bombardments could not be adequately catered for in the nearby French hospital (100 lire)³.

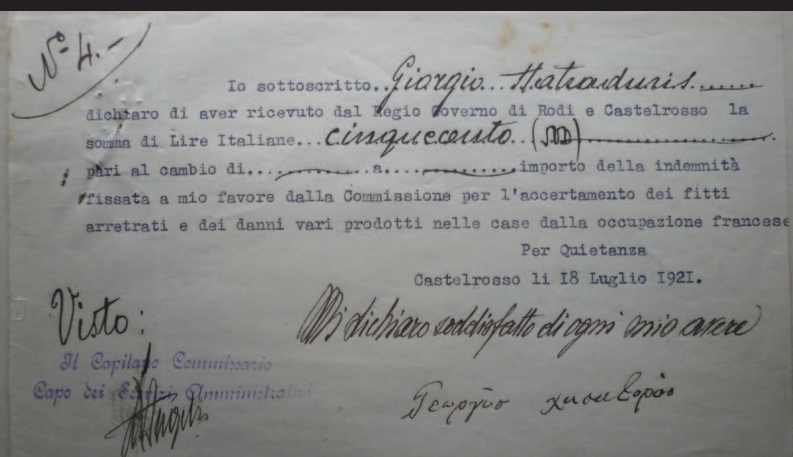
Evangelos Stamátoglou, the eldest surviving son of the island's great benefactor, had surrendered his opulent quayside home for two years for use as an officers' canteen (2,016 lire), while shipbuilder **Evangelos Gravás** ('o *Syrianós*') received 1,680 lire by way of rental for, and for damage caused to, his *Mandraki* home. Another successful claimant was **Yeorgios Pitsónis** who had seen his home on the waterfront requisitioned for use as yet another temporary infirmary (1,260 lire), while **Andreas Magriplís** was awarded the equivalent of 3 years' rental for the use of his house in *Pigádhia* as a 'sailors' co-operative'. Another was **Mihail Matthéas**, who received 1,795 lire for the requisitioning of his home 'for the necessities of war', while **Vlassios Antonás** received 840 lire for a claim for missing items of furniture in his requisitioned home in the *Mandraki*.

But not all claims related to appropriated homes. **Stavros Pitsikas**, who operated a small farm on the *Ayio Stefano* promontory, was compensated for the supply of straw for 2 years to the occupying forces (672 lire). **Yeorgios Petinákis**, a metal worker originally from Crete, had provided tools from his workshop for use by the French armourers and was paid 840 lire. And deputy mayor **Agapitos Xanthís** received a handsome 1,200 lire for the 45-month loan of his piano accordion to the French sailors for their rest and rehabilitation!

Those Kastellorizians who were abroad during the hostilities were obvious targets for appropriation. **Kyriakos Manolás**, one of the pioneers of early Greek settlement in Western Australia, returned to find his home used as an administrative office and received 1,780 lire. Similarly, **Konstandinos Mýriklis**, who had settled in Upper Egypt from as early as 1903, was informed that his home had been temporarily transformed into an isolation ward and received 294 lire.



A photo of the island's dignitaries aboard the Italian ship Galileo on the day of handover. From left they are deputy mayor Agapitos Xanthís, priest Ioannis Kisthínios, teacher Maria Samíou, Italian Admiral Galleani, teacher Despina Verekétoglou and mayor Ioannis Lakerdis.



An example of the receipts the Kastellorizians were asked to sign upon receiving their compensation from the Italians. This one relates to Yeorgios Hatsatoúris whose home had been transformed into an officers' mess.



Few traces remain of Kastellorizo's occupation by France. Here we have two surviving signs that adorned requisitioned homes. The first reads 'lavabos', or 'washroom', while the second appeared over the entrance to one of the administrative offices ('Pavillon C').

The island's shipowners had also been called upon to assist in the war effort. The prosperous **Loukás** brothers (the sons of **Yeorgios Loukás**) had seen their 100-tonne sailing ship requisitioned for 30 days during the height of the hostilities and received the hefty sum of 5,880 lire, largely because the vessel was returned with a broken mast. Others were not so fortunate. **Kostas Hatziyeorgoúras'** 16-tonne caique ('*Áyios Nikolaos*') was seriously damaged by a German submarine en route to Crete while ferrying passengers to the relative safety that island provided. Despite the written pleas of his two brothers, Nikolaos and Mihail, compensation was denied on the basis that the furnished evidence was inconclusive. Similarly, compensation for the loss of the brig '*Nikolaos*' owned jointly by **Dimitrios Kontós** and **Eleftherios Kondyliós**, which was sunk off Rhodes on 1 May 1918, was also denied, this time on a technicality because the ship had been registered in Alexandria and not French-occupied Kastellorizo.

The position of influence that **Lakerdis** held in relations between the French and the Kastellorizians is also evident in the claims made. Aside from the claim referred to earlier in this article, Lakerdis made a separate claim for a consignment of Anatolian timber that had been compulsorily acquired by the French for the erection of defensive ramparts. The compensation he received represented the difference between the shipment's market value (according to Lakerdis) and the price paid by the French – a massive 3,360 lire. And his loyal supporters did not miss out either. **Yeorgios Sérgis**, a café proprietor, was paid 80 lire for 10 days of food deliveries to Lakerdis himself, the island's then police chief, when a lockdown was in place at the height of the bombardments in January 1917.⁴

Perhaps the largest amount of correspondence in Italian files concerns the grand home of **Stavros Stamátoglou**, another son of the island's great benefactor. His three-storey home on the waterfront (more recently 'Sydney Restaurant') had been used as a residence for successive French governors, and this use had been extended into the early months of Italian occupation. Considerable dispute arose about the extent of the damage caused to the dwelling, while some of the family's lavish items of furniture were also said to be missing. A special commission was established to get to the bottom of the issue, with Stamátoglou ultimately paid a premium rental of 1,200 lire per month to cover prior unpaid rents and missing or damaged furnishings.

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There are many more stories preserved in the surviving records of those traumatic years. France had occupied Kastellorizo in December 1915 as a convenient stepping-stone to the Near East and as a thorn in Turkey's underbelly. By war's end, however, other priorities closer to home had persuaded the French to abandon the island in favour of Italy, which was embarking on its own enthusiastic program of territorial expansion, one that would lead to a disastrous alliance with Germany. And caught between them was tiny Kastellorizo, just like Odysseus when confronted by '*Scylla and Charybdis*'.

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¹ In Greek mythology, *Scylla* and *Charybdis* were two sea 'monsters' on opposite sides of the Straits of Messina between Calabria and Sicily. Odysseus was one of many travellers who were tormented by them. The idiom equates to the more modern expression 'between a rock and a hard place'.

² In 1922, one Italian lira was equivalent to US\$2.24.

³ The French hospital, named *Amiral Charner* after a sunken French vessel, was located in the old Ottoman *konáki* where the island's historical museum is today housed.

⁴ **Yeorgios Sérgis** operated a popular café known as '*tou Yiannifou*' (named after his father) adjacent to the island's main square.



The Augustinos (public) fourno/bakery.

THE KASTELLORIZIAN KITCHEN

by Helene Pappas, Sydney

The Kastellorizian kitchen was like many of the other rooms/areas of the Kastellorizian home, an area that typically maximised the use of limited space. For instance, the internal fireplace gave warmth in winter and was used to cook many dishes. Most houses had an outdoor oven for use in summer. Larger dishes were able to be accommodated at the local fourni / bakeries which had almost commercial sized ovens and which were used by families whenever there was a need to invite a lot of people for example, a wedding.

The special areas and techniques that typified the Kazzie kitchen which was very much a part of the Kastellorizian way of life included:

The Stérna (cistern)
Paráskio (fireplace with hob) and the
Fóurno (outdoor oven)

The Kastellorizian kitchen was usually located next to the stérna (domestic cistern) and contained some basic cooking utensils. The most important feature was the stove or oven. Typically, every house used an indoor stove (paráskio) and an outdoor oven (fourni) for cooking. The reason for this was not just to do with the different needs for each season ie winter vs summer cooking but also in the type and quantity of food that was to be cooked.



A fireplace with decorative features.



A typical paraskio (fireplace with hob) with Kastellorizian lady next to it / and a modern take on it.

In addition, there were many public bakeries (foúrni) which were used for the purpose of cooking the stuffed goat for festive periods, or other large dishes or even large quantities of bread and kouloúria (traditional Easter cookies). It was customary for the nikokirá, which in Greek literally means 'lady of the house', to prepare the dish and take it in her baking tin, known as the 'sini' (round, flat tin) or 'lamarina' (rectangular tin) to a public fóurno which used large wood-fired ovens.

The paráskio was used to make rice and pasta dishes such as sour trahaná, pligóuri, and for making all manner of mezéthes and skorthaliá (garlic dip). It was also used for frying fish and meatballs and for cooking dolmáthes and stews.

Sweets were also prepared in the paráskio, such as halvá, stravá, petoumézi, saraglí, amygdalota, and tiganítes, whereas baklavá and katoumária, were usually made in the outdoor oven or taken to the local fourno.

During various interviews I have conducted over time, I have enjoyed hearing the recollections and memories of the paraskio and the fourno from Kastellorizians. Here are a few:

Andonis Koufos (Perth, Australia):

"I would tell my friends that Kastellorizo, in its heyday had over 20,000 fóurni and they would be in disbelief! Then I would explain that it was because the island had a population

of 14,000 people and almost every house had a wood fired stove/oven, either indoor or outdoor and usually both."

"Καθε νοικοκυρα ειχε το φουρνακι της..." / "Every housewife had her outdoor oven..."

Lighting a good fire was an acquired skill, whether it was for heating or for cooking. In Kastellorizo, a good nikokirá had to master the art of lighting the fire of the paráskio and that of the fóurno (outdoor oven).

Katina Asvestis (Perth, Australia):

"There was always a good supply of mourelakia...!"

These were timber logs cut into small pieces for the ovens.

"There were two types of stouves (logs)... the 'imeres' (quiet) and the 'agries' (wild) ones. You used the imeres stouves for light dishes and koulouria and the agries stouves for heavier dishes - dishes that required a long bake time. A sign of a good nikokirá was to know how to choose the stouves and when to use them"

The outdoor household oven (foúrno) was usually close to the house, in the avlí (courtyard), however, there were occasions where due to lack of available space, it was located some distance away from the home. The fóurno required a lot more work to get going as the heat required for cooking the food demanded a more controlled, steady but high heat.

Kyriacos Mihalís Hondros has written a poem about the paráskio (along with the English translation).

Το Παράσκιο

Από χέρια τεχνητή φτιαγμένο με μεράκι,

Το δικό μας παράσκιο που τό λένε και τζάκι, Εκαιγε η φωτιά κι έψηνε νόστιμο φαί μας,

Να φάει η οικογένεια και ο φτωχός μαζί μας, Ευωδιαζε το σπίτι, ο δρόμος και η γειτονιά, όμορφα μοιράζοταν η ωραία μυρωδιά,

το βράδυ μαζευόμασταν γύρω από τη φωτιά,

και παραμύθια ακούαμα για δράκους και πουλιά. Όλα αυτά περάσανε των παιδικών μας χρόνων, χαρές και λύπες κι όνειρα έχουν πάρει ... δρόμο!

The fireplace

From an artist's hand made with love

our paraskio which they also call a fireplace the fire burned and cooked us delicious food for the family to eat and for the poor alike

It brought fragrant smells to our home, the street and the neighbourhood,

In the evening we gathered around the fire and we heard tales of dragons and birds All this passed our childhood years

Joys and sorrows and dreams have all ... disappeared!



Women walking to the Pasás wells collecting water.



The paraskio of a destroyed home.

To light the oven you needed a combination of charcoal and timber. Once the charcoal was lit, you added timber and waited for the fire to reach the requisite temperature. Once this was achieved, the nikokirá would carefully place the food to be cooked in a tray and wait close by to ensure the food did not overcook or burn.

In the 1870 British Consular report to the Foreign Office, the following was reported:

“Firewood is also brought in large quantities at Castel-Rosso, but they go and cut it themselves on the opposite coast and fetch it back in their boats without incurring any expense for it.

In a word, everything required for the use of the inhabitants has to be imported, and in years of dearth, even water; for which they are obliged to go 40 miles distant as there is none to be found nearer their island. However, every house has its water tank for drinking and 10 communal tanks supply the water required for household use.”

[Report to the Foreign Office (1870) by British Consulate (author unknown), Retrieved from Public Records Office, Kew]

The challenge of not having any fresh and flowing water in Kastellorizo has been met in various ways over the centuries. The oldest and largest reservoirs of the modern period were the Aheres, a network of gigantic cisterns located in the elevated valley of Ayia Triada between the elevations known as Mounda and Vigla. The word Aheres is said to come from the Arabic word for ‘ten’ (‘ashra’) because there were originally ten basins, but it could also be a reference to the two largest basins which measure precisely ten metres, both in width and depth. Later on, the Ottomans built three huge wells in strategic locations closer to the town. They became known as the Pasás wells after Ahmet Pasha of Kaiserli who constructed them between 1859-1860. These three giant cisterns still exist (although not used for any useful purpose) and you will find them in Mandraki, in the Horafia and behind the main town at the foot of the mountains.

As for many other cultures, collecting water and storing water was a time consuming chore but necessary for every household.

Underground cisterns/wells (stérnes) were a feature in almost every home on the island. They were constructed within the internal walls of the house and covered so as to prevent anyone from falling in and located in a part of the house that was close to the kitchen. Water was retrieved via a pail.

Each stérna was filled from rain water collected during the winter months, but could also be topped up from the Pasás wells and some neighbourhood reservoirs like Pigathia (the area behind St George ‘of the Well’ – Άγιος Γεωργιος του Πιγαδίου) and in Pera Meria. This was the household water supply generally used for cooking and cleaning.

Every household engaged in a ritual clean of its stérna every year by emptying and repainting the inner walls with lime (asvésti). Typically, this was done at the start of a new year.

Today, most houses on Kastellorizo have had their sternes shut down or eliminated given the public piped water supply and a desalination plant.



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