

# Thrice a Stranger



# Thrice a Stranger:

## *Penelope's Eastern Mediterranean Odyssey*

By

William Mallinson

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I devote this book to the Tusgioglu family of former refugees,  
and also to Bruce Clark, for his superb book *Twice a Stranger*, which  
he signed for my mother at an Anglo-Hellenic Association meeting in  
London. My mother is also a member of the Anglo-Turkish Association.  
She has several Greek and Turkish friends.



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## FOREWORD

A Greek grandfather born a citizen of the Ottoman Empire who becomes an Italian national provides the starting point for this book which, by focusing on the real story of a family against a background of historical events, shows how what the author calls the “minotaurs of fear and greed” can be overcome and the pseudo-theories of many a pundit of so-called international relations can be demolished. It sounds straightforward, doesn’t it? Well, it isn’t. Let us now consider each chapter and see how the author, with his undisputed talent for articulate iconoclasm, chips away at the shibboleths and pre-conceptions which all too often colour our judgement, blur our vision, or quite simply provide a neat, comfortable, ready-made *Weltanschauung* for those who are no longer able to think, or indeed feel, for themselves.

Chapters One and Two look at the complex history of the last days of the Ottoman Empire during which Strato, the author’s grandfather, is forced to flee his birthplace, taking refuge on the island of Rhodes, which had been Italian since 1912. Italy, Greece and Turkey are seen through Strato’s eyes, the narrative consummately peppered with descriptions of political events and personal accounts which bring into sharp relief the destiny of a man with no ideological, or indeed nationalistic, axe to grind, his fate being determined by the fanaticism and nationalism of the Turkish Kemal Atatürk and the Greek Venizelos.

In Chapter Three we learn of Strato’s three daughters, Penelope, Tina and Leila, all of whom lived under the Italians, the Germans, and then the British, before the island of Rhodes was finally given to Greece in 1947.

Chapters Four and Five provide a clear, succinct, historical account of both Greek and Turkish nationalism and identity, looking at Greek independence and the efforts to create a new state, i.e. Turkey, out of the rubble of the Ottoman Empire.

Chapters Six and Seven consider the similarities between Greece and Turkey, commenting on, for example, attachment to family, the tradition of hospitality and, at a cultural level, the instances of linguistic osmosis. The Greek Civil War is also dealt with, highlighting its complex nature

and dismissing the conveniently simplistic view that the conflict was between Communists and anti-Communists.

The final Chapter looks at the way in which Greece, in varying degrees, has been an obsession for Britain, France, Russia, Italy, the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. In the case of Britain and France, such events as the Don Pacifico affair and the Crimean War are referred to, both of which involved a blockade of the port of Piraeus. Greece, in the words of one expert, was catapulted from feudal conditions to modernity. Perhaps this explains, in part, its current troubles. Read on and discover the remarkable story of a family living in remarkable times, beginning with Strato and his eldest daughter Penelope, thrice a stranger.

**Adrian Mallinson**



Fig. 1

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to my grandfather Strato Tusgioglu, my parents David and Tina Mallinson, my sister Leila Taylor, and to my cousins Marina Georgopoulou, William Gardner, Pierluigi Nanni, Tim Mallinson and John Mallinson, for documents and memories. A special thanks to Zoran Ristic for his creative advice, work and understanding.





## INTRODUCTION

I begin this story at Villa Penelope, in the formerly Venetian and Ottoman stronghold of Methoni, Greece, since my aunt Penelope finally found peace here, having been thrice a refugee. She passed away, with her memories, in 1995, having been born an Ottoman citizen in 1919, refugeed to Italian Rhodes in 1921, then to Italy in 1950, and then again, forced to leave Turkey, her birthplace, in 1974. She was the quintessential intellectual Greek, burdened by thinking, transcending fanaticism, like her father, my grandfather Efstratios (henceforth Strato) Tusgioglu, a Greek with the blood of old Hellas coursing through his veins, who never held the citizenship of the modern Greek state, but only Ottoman and then Italian citizenship, like his daughter Penelope. It was his escape in 1921 from Antalya<sup>1</sup>, on the southern coast of Asia Minor, organised by the tactile, realistic but human Italians, that led to him, his wife Marika, his first daughter (my aunt Penelope) and eight other relatives becoming refugees on the beautiful island of Rhodes.

This story is a Brito-Graeco-Italo-Turco labyrinth, a test of your faculties, where I shall weave a series of true stories and events, both chronologically and thematically. By the end, I hope to have killed—at least in your minds—the minotaurs of fear and greed, which since time immemorial have so bedeviled the beautiful life God gave us. The medium I use is my own family, mainly, but not exclusively, on my mother's side, whose bloodline stems from the Greeks of Anatolia. On my father's side, we are Cumbrians, of Celtic and Northern Viking stock, and not Anglo-Saxon. This intriguing dichotomy explains why my grandfathers were on opposite sides in the Great War; why my Greek Ottoman grandfather's Italian son-in-law Carlo, Penelope's husband, was a military enemy of my father; and why my Uncle, Squadron Leader William Mallinson DFC<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Nowadays called 'Antalya', but also referred to in this book by the Italians as 'Adalia', although its original Greek name is 'Attaleia'. Some Greek names in Turkey have been Turkified (for example, 'Ephesus' has become 'Efes'), while others have been substituted, with, for example, 'Helicarnassus' becoming 'Bodrum'.

<sup>2</sup> See the appendices for a humorous poem by my uncle about Great Salkeld. Bill was a pretty daredevil type, flying a Lancaster bomber around Great Salkeld's

bombed Milan, and perhaps Carlo, who spent some time there. Even more intriguingly, it provides the explanation as to why my Ottoman grandfather Strato helped Italy, sometimes helping the intriguing Italian Secret Service man Ugo Luca, while Carlo, after serving in Mussolini's armies, helped Greece in the early seventies, operating from Turkey. As we weave our way through the story, things will become clearer.



Fig. 2

Our topics are the Great War; the destructive ambition of the Hellenistic Eleftherios Venizelos, and the Italian response to his brand of Hellenism; undercover work; the island of Rhodes; the Fourth World War<sup>3</sup>; Palestine and the bloodstained birth of the state of Israel; Greek-Turkish relations; the Cyprus conundrum; and my own experience of Greece and the Greeks. I stab through the bone to the marrow, in an attempt to demonstrate that people's hearts will always be more important than political ideology and greed in determining reality and veracity. For those among you who may already be frightened about yourselves, I suggest that you stop reading, and give the book to a charity shop.

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Saint Cuthbert's Church. My father reciprocated in his own way by shooting a hole through the church's weather vane. See the appendices for his poem about Great Salkeld, and a love poem.

<sup>3</sup> The First World War was the Seven Years' War, the Second the Napoleonic Wars, and the Third was the Great War.

My parents' fathers, namely William, an Anglican Christian from Great Salkeld in Britain, and Strato, a Christian Orthodox Greek from Adalia in the Ottoman Empire, fought each other in the Great War, although they never met, and only got to know of each other's existence thanks to two of their children, my parents David and Catherine (Tina/Titina), meeting and marrying: my paternal grandfather, William Mallinson, was at Gallipoli in 1915, in the British Army, while my other grandfather, Strato Tusgioglu, was in the Ottoman Army. The latter, as a Christian, was not allowed to bear arms, and conducted a military orchestra, unlike many other Christian "auxiliaries", who had to engage in menial tasks, such as road-building. He had several Moslem friends, which helped. No such luck for William, whose commission papers were sunk, and who, having survived the slaughter of Gallipoli, then served in Palestine at the beginning of the British mandate. He sent an infamous postcard back home, which stated that the "Jews wanted everything for nothing." My father inadvertently followed in his father William's footsteps in Palestine, thirty years later, at the end of the British mandate, when he was shot at by Zionist terrorists. My mother, who had met my father in 1946, beat Moshe Dayan at table tennis in Rhodes in 1948, at the catastrophic conference on Palestine. She escaped the horror of Count Bernadotte's murder by Zionist terrorists, as my grandfather forbade her from accompanying the count on his fateful peace-keeping mission to Palestine.

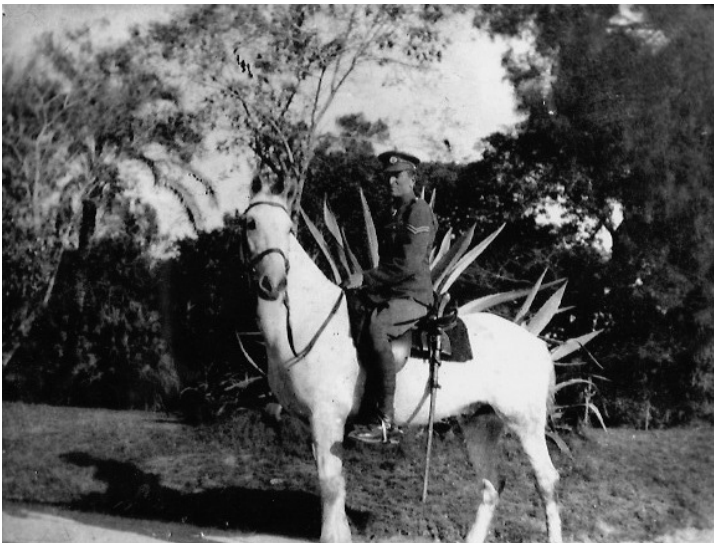


Fig. 3

I exist because my parents met: after a brief spell in the Jungle Training Corps, fighting the Japanese in Burma, and commanding ferocious Gurkhas in Kashmir, my father, the twenty year-old Lieutenant David Mallinson of the Black Watch and Frontier Force, who had suspended his studies in Fine Arts at The Slade School, University College, London University, was posted to Rhodes via Cairo and Palestine, in 1946, where he met my mother, born in Italian Rhodes because my grandfather Strato and his family had been helped by the Italians to escape from fanatical Ataturkists in Adalia, who were out to kill him. My father, unlike the usual British army officer, so disdained by the supercilious wordsmith Lawrence Durrell (also in Rhodes at the time)<sup>4</sup>, was more interested in drawing than drinking and womanising, and was therefore actually ordered by his commanding officer to attend a dance at the Akteon, where he was introduced to my mother. In the four months of their acquaintanceship, they met a further four times, always accompanied by a member of my mother's family. They never kissed. My father was posted on to Egypt and then Germany, while my mother worked for the British Military Administration and for the new Greek administration, after Rhodes was handed to Greece in April 1947<sup>5</sup>, and then for the United Nations. Luckily for me, they corresponded by letter for four years, and married in Rome in 1950. We celebrated their sixty fifth wedding anniversary in London in 2015, as I was completing this book. The Queen sent a card of congratulations.

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<sup>4</sup> My father told me that Durrell was dismissive of the British army officers in Rhodes.

<sup>5</sup> Italy captured the Dodecanese from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, after some nasty fighting.



Fig. 4

As I write, everything flows, and the moment becomes the past, for I am history. The future cannot exist, except in our mind, which is in fact our memory. Only history exists. If you erase it, you lobotomise yourself, and become one of Orwell's living dead. If you already feel insulted, then stop reading this now, as you are already hermetically sealed into your politically correct pseudo-intellectual self-rationalising prison, and too far-gone to benefit. But if you can take these friendly slaps, then read on.

I have always followed the Guicciardini method of using verifiable documents to write about the past, in other words, history. But the accidental historian, the general Thucydides, who had few documents on which to rely, also showed us the validity of listening to people's accounts, as did his great predecessor Herodotus. This story uses my family as the

source, with only some help from documents. It is, literally, a history, an account of the past, with my own comments and interpretation. It most emphatically does not use, whether expressly or subliminally, any of the plethora of convenient and pedantic social science international relations theories, which depend on grand-sounding “conceptual frameworks”, with their cherry-picking of history to force facts into a Procrustean so-called model: the weaker the mind, the greater the tendency to try and categorise the abstract. In other words, I try to avoid the “received wisdom” of warped versions of Greek and Turkish propaganda, so often masquerading as official history, and so often manipulated by party-politically enslaved designer academics. This is a story about real people. Human behaviour—à la Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Guicciardini and Machiavelli—and its history, not international relations theory, is the basis of understanding this book.

The book’s underlying message is that the same things have returned, return and will return, but with different colours, for human behaviour is essentially immutable, whatever the cheap gadgetry and speed-enforcing, stultifying and lobotomising technology thrust on humans by other humans in the name of progress and profit. To elaborate my line of thinking: when my brother was drawn recently into a quick conversation with a young lady, who was shocked that he did not have or want an I-Phone, saying that it represented progress, my brother asked her whether giving cannibals knives and forks also represented progress. Rather than attempt to reply, she disappeared into the bar’s lavatory.



Fig. 5

## **PART ONE**





# CHAPTER ONE

## BETWEEN VENIZELIST AND KEMALIST FANATICS

### **The Labyrinth Begins**

A hot day in August 1969 in Antalya: seventy four years after my grandfather Strato's birth, and forty eight years after he had escaped being murdered by Ataturk's fanatics, my intrepid father had driven my mother, sister, brother and me from London to Turkey, via France, Italy and Greece. Somehow, we found the home which Strato and his family had left hurriedly at night in the summer of 1921. Apart from my mother, Strato's two other daughters were there with their husbands and most of their children (my cousins), from Italy, and his brothers and sisters from Rome and Rhodes. Although Eleftherios Venizelos had contrived with his political friend Ataturk to dispossess my grandfather's father Petros of his properties in Adalia, and Strato's wife, Marika, of her vineyards and properties in Smyrna and Konya, my grandfather felt that it was high time to visit the birthplace from which he had been torn so suddenly in 1921. Having been accorded access to the house by the five Turkish families who now lived there, we entered a room, whereupon my grandfather burst into tears: he remembered how he had returned from leave from the Ottoman Army to find that his mother had died. We now turn back to the Great War.



Fig. 1-1

## Italy, Greece, Turkey and Venizelos through Strato's Eyes

Eleftherios Venizelos is a somewhat controversial figure: after championing Cretan freedom and union with Greece, he was unable to

control his own ambition, and ended up promoting manic Greek expansionism, and presiding over the demise of the three thousand year-old Greek presence in Anatolia, in the shape of the expulsion to Greece of over one and a half million Christians of Greek stock. This expansionism became known as the “Great Idea” (Megali Idea), which I term the “Mad Mistake”. His fight with the King, who wished, like the intelligently realistic Dutch, to remain neutral, resulted, to cut a tortuous but well-known story short, in the King leaving Greece and Venizelos joining the Entente Powers in 1917. Despite his dynamic start, this “Hellene a little too Anglicised”<sup>1</sup> bequeathed an exhausted and shattered country to the people of Greece. His policies certainly affected my grandfather and his family negatively. Following his territorial successes in the Balkan Wars, when the furious “Young Turks” reacted by slaughtering Anatolian Christians of Greek stock and Armenians, he turned against the King, who wished to keep Greece neutral in the Great War; pandered to the French and British; and took Greece into a war that led to the famous catastrophe for which he was primarily responsible. Before turning to my grandfather Strato, let us look at some views on Venizelos and Greek expansionism. Harold Nicolson wrote that Venizelos was an imperialist, but wrong to have confidence in his own country,<sup>2</sup> while even the careful Michael Llewellyn Smith wrote that although the educated Greeks in Asia Minor sympathised with Greece’s nationalist aspirations in theory, such sympathy did not yet extend to the concrete political demand for *enosis* with Greece.<sup>3</sup> This is a typical understatement, by a former British ambassador to Greece.

My grandfather Strato was certainly one of these educated Greeks. Born in Adalia in 1894, he was educated at the French School in Smyrna, and then worked briefly with the Italian diplomatic mission back in Adalia, before being taken on as an interpreter at the Italian Hospital, run by an Italian naval officer, Dr. Enrico Cavallini. In the evenings, he attended Italian classes organised by an order of Italian monks, where he was able to add perfect Italian to his Greek, Turkish and French. In 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. When Italy entered the following year, on the side of the Entente, the Italians hurriedly

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<sup>1</sup> Pentzopoulos, Dimitri, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact upon Greece*, Mouton and Co., Paris and The Hague, 1957, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolson, Harold, *Peacemaking 1919*, The Universal Library, Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1965, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> Llewellyn Smith, Michael, *Ionian Vision*, Hurst and Company, London, 1998 pp. 29-30.

left Adalia, but not without cementing their relationship with Strato. In his own words, “In May 1915, with Italy’s entry into the war, the Mission abandoned Adalia and I was given precise instructions on how to behave and act in the case of a military occupation of the zone.”<sup>4</sup> As Llewellyn Smith dispassionately writes, “it is true that Greeks engaged in intelligence work for the Entente Powers.”<sup>5</sup> Thus it is clear that the Italians—at the least—were planning on possessing some of Anatolia at least as early as 1915. They had of course already taken Libya from the Ottomans, and then the Dodecanese, in 1912, in hard fighting that contradicts the caricature of the supine Italian soldier.

That Greeks—and no doubt others—engaged in intelligence work is hardly surprising, in an empire that had been in terminal decline since at least the 1850s, when Tsar Nicholas I is said to have described it as “a very sick man who had fallen into a state of decrepitude”, and when the controlling Turkic Moslem elements of the empire were persecuting and killing their Anatolian Christian populations in the turmoil accompanying Greece’s involvement in the Balkan and then the Great Wars. For example, in 1916, even before Greece had entered the Great War on the side of the Entente, the entire population of Ayvali was turned out of its houses and transported to Balıkesir and other centres inland. Muslim refugees from the lost provinces of European Turkey were then settled in the town. In Ayvali, Bergama, Dikeli and other towns, Greek churches, schools, hospitals and private houses were desecrated and ransacked after the expulsions. The Turks claimed that the deportations were a military measure dictated by the necessity of clearing the coastal regions of disloyal and hostile Greek populations.<sup>6</sup> In a nutshell, the Ottoman Empire, but Anatolia in particular, was falling into administrative chaos. Those Greeks who helped non-Ottoman powers were doing so out of a sense of survival, having been at the rough end of incipient Turkish nationalism since at least the Balkan Wars. And since the Italian presence was strong in Adalia, it was logical that the local educated Christians would turn to the Italians for protection.

As I mentioned above, Strato was drafted into the Ottoman army as an auxiliary officer. As a non-Muslim, he was not allowed to bear arms but, unlike most Christian draftees, was not used as free labour to build roads,

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<sup>4</sup> Strato Tusgioglu, *memorandum* for General Ugo Luca, Rome, 18 July 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Op.cit., Llewellyn Smith, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

serving rather, among other things, as a conductor in a military orchestra, perhaps thanks to his various Moslem friends. “During the period of the war”, he wrote, “following the instructions of Major Cavallini before his departure from Adalia, I was able to keep him informed about the situation of the country, and did this with grave danger to my safety.”<sup>7</sup> For his part, Cavallini wrote of Strato in 1920:

*This fellow speaks and writes Italian, Greek, Turkish and French very well, and furthermore, because of his studies in Smyrna, has a good general education. Of youthful and ready wit, honest, obedient to superiors, he has always performed with the utmost professionalism the difficult and delicate assignments as interpreter at the hospital.*

*He has also rendered an excellent information service to Italy, and even if of the orthodox religion and Turkish nationality<sup>8</sup>, has always shown himself to be faithful towards, and enthusiastic about, Italy and the Italians. I consider him to be invaluable, and warmly recommend him for a job in the government or a private company.<sup>9</sup>*

In the chaos that was the Ottoman Empire, it was natural that thinking Christians, seeing their livelihoods coming under ever-increasing threat from fanatics, particular in Anatolia, where they were sitting targets, would turn to what they saw as forces for stability. They thought, logically at the time, that much of Anatolia was likely to be divided up between the powers, with perhaps a rump Turkish state remaining. Harold Nicolson wrote: “For the Turks I had, and have, no sympathy whatsoever. Long residence at Constantinople had convinced me that behind his mask of indolence, the Turk conceals impulses of the most brutal savagery. This conviction was not diminished by his behaviour towards the Kut garrison or towards the Armenians within his borders. The Turks have contributed nothing whatsoever to the progress of humanity: they are a race of Anatolian marauders; I desired only in the Peace Treaty that they should be relegated to Anatolia.”<sup>10</sup>

The nationalism that had started to sweep through Europe in the wake of the French Revolution, although temporarily squashed by the likes of

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<sup>7</sup> Strato Tusgioglu, *curriculum vitae*.

<sup>8</sup> Clearly, those subjects of the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia were already seen as Turkish, although the state of Turkey would not exist until 1923.

<sup>9</sup> Medical Major of the Royal Italian Navy Dr. Enrico Cavallini, *letter of reference*, Adalia, 31 December 1920.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit., Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, p. 35.

Metternich, had begun to come back with a vengeance, both in 1830 and 1848. But further east, one could of course hardly invent an imperial Turkish nationalism, since Turkey did not yet exist as a country, and was not under foreign occupation. But Turks did exist. And it was only a question of time as to when a racial, linguistic and Moslem form of nationalism would attract those who were beginning to consider themselves more as Turks than simply as part of a large and decaying empire. And these late-in-the-day nationalists would make Garibaldi's exertions seem like a Sunday school tea party when it came to how to treat innocent non-Turkish civilians. The "Young Turk" movement began, and with it the idea of "Turkey for the Turks", later to be plagiarised and promoted increasingly fanatically by Ataturk. The victims were those sufficiently different from Moslems of Turkic stock, and thus mainly Christians of Greek stock and Armenians, as well as some of Arabic and Assyrian stock. It was a particularly vicious form of nationalism, affecting many innocent lives until today and tomorrow. At the end of the Great War in Europe, the area we today know as Turkey was descending into chaos. The Sultanate in Constantinople, as it was still known, was little more than a paper tiger, with nationalists wielding increasing power to the east.

Strato married my grandmother Marika a few months before the armistice, by kidnapping her with a group of orchestral friends. In those days, kidnapping the girl one loved and wished to marry was a common custom. He took her straight to his parents, as to elope with her alone would have meant her being considered a strumpet! Penelope was born at the time of the armistice's finalisation, with the emasculated Sultanate, in January 1919. The Italian consulate re-opened in Adalia in March, and Strato resumed his position at the Italian hospital, while Venizelos negotiated at the peace conference in Paris, and Ataturk gained in strength. An expert sums up the situation succinctly: "By the spring of 1918, a quarter of a million Greeks were mobilised. They were in action for the first time at the end of May. When the final assault of the allies took place in September, the Greeks were able to make an honourable contribution to it. In conjunction with the British, French and Italian troops they cleared Macedonia of the enemy and advanced into Serbia and Bulgaria. At the end of September, after only a fortnight's fighting, the campaign for which the allies had waited three years in and around Salonika was over. The Bulgars asked for an armistice on 30 September, thus cutting off Turkey from her allies in Europe. A month later, the Turks in their turn capitulated, and by 11<sup>th</sup> November, the war was over on all fronts. Greek