

Eugene T. Rossides (1927-2020)

His Place in History

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On May 16, 2020, Eugene Telemachus Rossides passed away at the age of 92. During an eventful life, he carved his name into history in more ways than one – by playing American football, by practising law, by serving in two separate presidential administrations, by founding the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) in Washington DC, by co-inspiring an unprecedented congressional embargo on Turkey, by writing prolifically and by helping to imprint the rule of law into the lexicon of the ‘Cyprus problem.’

Upon the death of Rossides, known as Gene to his friends, the AHI paid a justifiably glowing tribute to its founder. The tribute included two paragraphs that articulated the essence of who he was, what he believed in and why he will be remembered:

A proud American who never lost sight of his ancestry, Gene Rossides championed and inspired a generation and more to advocate for the rule of law, for Hellenism, and justice for Cyprus. He provided a lifetime of service and dedication to America, Greece, Cyprus, and Hellenic ideals. The Greek American community and Hellenic diaspora are in a far better place because of Gene Rossides.

Gene Rossides will be remembered for his many contributions to the law, legal scholarship, athletics and government service. He understood that United States foreign policy must be grounded on ethical principles and not only national power. He was the first Greek American to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate to an Executive Branch office. He served as Assistant Secretary for the United States Treasury in the Nixon administration [from 1969 until 1973].²

The Early Years

Rossides was born in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn, New York, on October 23, 1927. When he was a one-month-old baby, his father, Telemachus, a doctor from Kyrenia in the then British Crown Colony of Cyprus, died; Telemachus had been suffering from leukaemia. Rossides, therefore, was brought up by Anna, his widowed mother, who came from Laconia in the Peloponnese of Greece. To aggravate matters, he and his family endured the hardships induced by the post-1929 'Great Depression'. These hit his family hard.³

Rossides acquired a deep interest in the island of Cyprus, from where his late father had hailed. Rossides was also inspired by the history of Hellenism, by the status of Greece as the birthplace of democracy under the rule of law and, to quote the title of one of his books, by *Greece's Pivotal Role in World War II and its Importance to the U.S. Today*.⁴

The higher education of Rossides began in Columbia College at Columbia University. At Columbia from 1945 until 1948, Rossides became a legendary American footballer whose sporting prowess was formally recognised upon his induction into the Hall of Fame of Columbia University on October 2, 2008.⁵

Rossides was one of a number of Hellenes and Americans of Hellenic heritage who left their mark on sports during the 1940s. Another prime example is Stylianos Kyriakides from the then British Crown Colony of Cyprus. In 1946, Kyriakides won the Boston Marathon while wearing a shirt emblazoned with the word 'Greece' above the number 77. Kyriakides secured victory in the most extraordinary of circumstances; he had spent much of the World War II in Axis-occupied Greece, which had borne the brunt of a famine, and multiple atrocities, including the Nazi genocide of the vast majority of that country's Jews.⁶

The post-football exploits of Rossides are recorded in a 'Biographical Sketch' published in 1982 as part of the proceedings of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the US Senate. This records that in 1949 Rossides graduated from Columbia with a Bachelor of Arts (AB) degree. Then, in 1952, he graduated from Columbia Law School with a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree. In the same year, he joined the Rackets Bureau on the staff of the New York County District Attorney, Frank S. Hogan.⁷

From 1952 until 1953, Rossides was legal officer for the Air Material Command of the US Air Force. Thereafter, in various phases from 1954 onwards, Rossides practised as a lawyer in the offices of a US law firm based in New York – Dwight, Royall, Harris, Koegel & Casky, which was later known by other names notably Rogers & Wells.

From 1956 until 1958, Rossides was back in public service as Assistant Attorney General of the State of New York in the Bureau of Securities. He was appointed to this role by the Attorney General of New York, Jacob K. Javits. Then, from 1958 until 1961, Rossides served in the Administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower as Assistant to

the Under Secretary of the Treasury, Fred C. Scribner Jr, a fellow lawyer who was much older than Rossides.⁸ In turn, both Scribner and Rossides served under the leadership of Robert B. Anderson, the then Secretary of the Treasury and another experienced lawyer. Not only was Rossides intellectually equipped to hold his own in the company of such able lawyers. He evidently learned much from them. Rossides likewise learned much from Eisenhower.

Eisenhower and Rogers

Prior to the involvement of Dwight D. Eisenhower in politics as a Republican President from 1953 until 1961, he was the general who co-designed the Allied victory in World War II in 1945, the first Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (1950-1952) and President of Columbia University (1948-1953).⁹ His tenure at Columbia overlapped with the studies of Rossides at the same institution. In turn, the tenure of Rossides in the Eisenhower Administration from 1958 until 1961 overlapped with that of another lawyer, William P. Rogers, the Attorney General of the US from 1957 until 1961, who later served as Secretary of State (1969-1973).

Rossides considered Rogers to be 'a mentor.'¹⁰ This is partly because, over the decades, the careers of Rogers and Rossides entwined. Both served in the second Eisenhower Administration, in the first Nixon Administration and, from time to time both before after their respective stints in the Eisenhower Administration, as colleagues (and, latterly, as partners) in Rogers & Wells, which, in 2000, merged with the German law firm Pünder Volhard Weber & Axster and the London-based international law firm Clifford Chance.¹¹

Eisenhower clearly shaped the thinking of Rossides in more ways than one. This can be ascertained from an oral history interview given by Rossides on May 10, 1990, the transcript of which has been archived at the Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home in Abilene, Kansas. With self-evident respect for one of the foremost figures in global history, Rossides explained how he had met Eisenhower at Columbia and how he had been 'active' as a Republican in support of Eisenhower during his Presidential re-election campaign in 1956.¹²

In the same interview, Rossides offered an insight into the what he saw as the humane mindset of Eisenhower. More particularly, Rossides indicated that the 'greatness' of Eisenhower flowed from the fact that he went 'beyond' focusing on 'peace abroad and prosperity at home.' As Rossides put it, Eisenhower 'personified' the 'whole concept' that 'we're all human beings', that 'we're all individuals' and that 'we all have our individual worth.'¹³

What is particularly revealing is the reply given by Rossides when the interviewer mentioned the historic address of President Eisenhower before a joint session of the US Congress on January 5, 1957, just a few weeks after the Soviet invasion of Hungary on

November 4, 1956, the Israeli invasion of Egypt on 29, October 1956, and (pursuant to a trilateral arrangement reached in secret in *Sèvres*) the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt on November 5, 1956. Rossides quipped that Eisenhower was 'a man of contradiction' as he was 'a war hero who hated war' and who 'desperately wanted peace, while appreciating 'the importance of it.'¹⁴

Throughout his career, Rossides regularly cited Eisenhower. For instance, in an excoriating article entitled 'Turkey's War Crimes' published in *The National Herald* on July 30, 2005, Rossides echoed and implicitly adopted Eisenhower's historic Presidential Address of October 31, 1956,¹⁵ which was delivered amidst the turmoil in relation to Egypt described above. More specifically, Rossides quoted the following passages from Eisenhower's Presidential Address, which helped to cement the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes as critical principles of the post-1945 global order:

We believe these actions to have been taken in error, for we do not accept the use of force as a wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes.

In all the recent troubles in the Middle East there have, indeed, been injustices suffered by all nations involved. But I do not believe that another instrument of injustice – war – is a remedy for these wrongs.

There can be no peace without law. And there can be no law if we were to invoke one code of international conduct for those who oppose us and another for our friends. [*Emphasis added by Rossides.*]

The society of nations has been slow in developing means to apply this truth. But the passionate longing for peace on the part of all peoples of the earth compels us to speed our search for new and more effective instruments of justice.

The peace we seek and need means much more than mere absence of war. It means the acceptance of law and the fostering of justice in all the world.

To our principles guiding us in this quest we must stand fast. In so doing we can honor the hopes of all men for a world in which peace will truly and justly reign.¹⁶

Hellenic Trailblazers

On January 20, 1961, President Eisenhower vacated the White House upon the termination of his second term and the Inauguration of his successor, John F. Kennedy.

The changing of the guard resulted in Rossides and Rogers returning to private practice as lawyers. Exactly eight years later, on January 20, 1969, their fellow lawyer, Richard M. Nixon, underwent his own Inauguration as President of the US. Nixon had previously served as Vice-President in the two Eisenhower Administrations from January 20, 1953 until January 20, 1961. Nixon nominated both Rogers and Rossides to serve in his first Administration. Rogers became Secretary of State and Rossides became Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, initially under David M. Kennedy, the Secretary of the Treasury from 1969 until 1971.

In an interview granted to the *National Herald*, the contents of which were published in 2010, Rossides recalled that 'I was the first Greek American Presidential appointee requiring Senate confirmation.'¹⁷ As a lawyer to his finger-tips, Rossides chose his words with scrupulous care. By becoming, in his words, 'the first Greek American Presidential appointee requiring Senate confirmation', Rossides blazed a trail in the specific sense that he had described.

As Rossides implicitly acknowledged with his fastidious phraseology, he was not the first American of Hellenic heritage to serve in the upper echelons of one of the three federal branches of governance in Washington DC. That accolade belongs to another lawyer, Lucas Miltiades Miller, a Democrat who represented Wisconsin in the House of Representatives in the 52nd Congress from March 4, 1891 until March 3, 1893. Miller was born in Livadia, Greece on September 15, 1824 but was left an orphan at the age of four, when he was adopted by J.P. Miller, an American who served as a colonel in the Hellenic Army during the Greek revolution. As such, the young Lucas accompanied his foster father upon his return to the United States and settled in Montpelier, Vt., in 1828.¹⁸

In more recent times, in 1959, John Brademas became the first US-born American of Hellenic heritage to join the US Congress as an elected Democratic Representative for Indiana. Brademas went on to serve in the House of Representatives until 1981.¹⁹

In 1969, the year in which Rossides made history, so, too, did Spiro Theodore Agnew, another lawyer. Agnew became the first – and hitherto the only – American of Hellenic heritage to be elected as Vice-President. Previously, from 1967 until 1969, Agnew had been the elected governor of Maryland; thus, Agnew became the first American of Hellenic heritage to serve as a governor of a US state.²⁰

In 1977, after six years of representing Maryland in the House of Representatives, Paul Spyros Sarbanes, a Democrat and lawyer, became the first elected Senator of Greek American heritage.²¹ He would hold that seat for the next thirty years.²² Sadly, Senator Sarbanes died on December 6, 2020, just a few months after Rossides.

Olympia Snowe, a Republican from Maine, followed in the footsteps of Miller and Sarbanes, but she created two new firsts – in 1979 by becoming the first elected American woman of Hellenic heritage to enter the House of Representative and in 1995 by

becoming the first such woman to enter the Senate. In the process, Senator Snowe also became the first woman to serve in the Senate, having previously served in the House of Representatives.²³

In consequence, Rossides was one of a number of Hellenic trailblazers who underscored a transformation in American society. Firstly, in tandem with the inauguration in 1961 of John F. Kennedy as the first Roman Catholic President of the US and the appointment in 1967 of Thurgood Marshall as the first African American Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, the entry of Rossides into the first Nixon Administration in 1969 helped to reinforce the sea change sweeping across Washington DC – and the US as a whole – during the 1960s. Secondly, alongside Brademas, Agnew, Sarbanes and Snowe, Rossides demonstrated that in the post-segregation epoch of legally recognised equality before the law and the meritocracy that goes with it, the federal organs of governance in Washington DC were actually as well as legally open to all US citizens irrespective of ethnicity, religion or other background. In other words, the rise of Rossides, a Greek Orthodox Christian, affirmed that these organs were not the preserve of US citizens known popularly as WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants).

The Pivotal Years of 1973 and 1974

Richard Nixon enjoyed his second Inauguration as President of the US on January 20, 1973. That same year, Rossides, Rogers and Agnew all exited the Nixon administration, albeit for vastly different reasons. On 13 February 13, 1973, the *New York Times* reported that Rossides had left the Nixon administration to return to private practice as a lawyer.²⁴ Rogers stayed a little longer but he eventually exited on September 3, 1973. As the *New York Times* noted in its obituary of Rogers after his death in 2001, 'Mr. Rogers left the Nixon administration unblemished by the Watergate scandals.'²⁵ The same applies for Rossides. Indeed, the timing of their respective departures was fortuitous. Both were well away from the second Nixon administration when its skeletons started to tumble out into the open.

Agnew resigned – in disgrace – as Vice-President on October 10, 1973;²⁶ he was later disbarred.²⁷ Nixon likewise resigned – in disgrace – as President on August 9, 1974;²⁸ he, too, was later disbarred.²⁹

Whereas Rossides was impressed with Eisenhower, he saw through Nixon. Indeed, Rossides was evidently bitter at the brusque way in which Nixon had treated – or, rather, mistreated – Rogers. Despite being Secretary of State for so many years, Rogers was effectively marginalised in that role by Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, the National Security Adviser, the latter of whom was the apple in the eye of President Nixon. Rossides detected this. Indeed, in the interview Rossides gave to the *National Herald*, he did not mince his words: 'Bill Rogers was a great person. One of Nixon's stupidest mistakes was relying on

Henry Kissinger – which in my opinion was his downfall – instead of relying on Bill Rogers.³⁰

From 1956 to 1973, Rossides had walked in and out of the ‘revolving doors’ of the centers of power in New York and Washington. If he had wanted to, in the face of the tumultuous developments in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1974, he could have followed so many other members of the US establishment who chose to become silent spectators or militant apologists of Turkey. In contrast, Rossides had the moral courage not only to condemn Turkey but also to characterise US policy as misguided and contrary to the very values of the US. This was *not* because Rossides was anti-American but because he *was* American and, as such, steeped in the democratic values of the US, such as respect for the rule of law.

The American Hellenic Institute (AHI)

Rossides filed the inauguration papers of the AHI in Washington DC on August 1, 1974.³¹ The timing was telling. It was eight days before the resignation of President Nixon. It was also between the two inter-linked Turkish invasions of the Republic of Cyprus on July 20, 1974 and – three weeks after the downfall of the military junta in Athens and the short-lived coupist regime it had manufactured in Nicosia – on August 14, 1974.

Rossides took this bold initiative after realising that the US, at the behest of Dr. Kissinger, Rogers’ successor as Secretary of State, would not hinder Turkey in pursuit of its aggressive military goals, which were being achieved through brute force resulting in ethnic cleansing and multiple other acts of inhumanity. After founding the AHI, Rossides repeatedly condemned Turkey for misusing American weaponry, committing war crimes, spreading what he repeatedly called ‘lawlessness’ in the Turkish-occupied north of the Republic of Cyprus and helping to facilitate or turn a blind eye to such ‘lawlessness’.

A short-term achievement of Rossides – and of the Greek American mass movement – was the imposition by the US Congress of an unprecedented embargo on arms shipments from the US to Turkey. The embargo remained from 1974 to 1978.³² A permanent legacy of Rossides was the insertion – and, to date, retention – of the rule of law into the vocabulary of the ‘Cyprus problem’. This was the outcome of the tireless efforts of Rossides through written as well as verbal submissions to Congress, lectures, statements, articles and books on blatant violations of law in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Among the most important works of Rossides are the four texts listed below, the first three of which are freely available online. Each one reflects his pre-occupation with the rule of law and its subversion in the Turkish-occupied north of the Republic of Cyprus.

1. A 'Prepared Statement' published in the records of the meeting of the International Relations Committee of the American House of Representatives held on July 10, 1975.³³
2. A landmark 70-page academic article, 'Cyprus and the Rule of Law', which was published in 1991 in the *Syracuse Journal of International Law and Commerce*.³⁴ The article embodies the passages quoted below which encapsulate the post-1974 thesis of Rossides, as influenced by Eisenhower and by the common law doctrine of precedent:

The United States should follow the policy established by President Eisenhower; laws must be applied to friend and foe alike. If, in 1974, the United States had joined with the world community in condemning and trying to reverse Turkey's aggression in Cyprus, would Iraq's dictator, Saddam Hussein, have invaded Kuwait in 1990? The force of precedent should not be underestimated. ...

Is the rule of law to be applied uniformly, or is there to be a continuation of the double standard for Turkey?³⁵

3. A scholarly text, *The United States and Cyprus: Double Standards and the Rule of Law*,³⁶ co-edited by Rossides and Van Coufoudakis.
4. The candid book-length assessment of Dr. Kissinger: *Kissinger and Cyprus: A Study in Lawlessness* by Eugene Rossides.³⁷

By imprinting the rule of law into the lexicon of the 'Cyprus problem', Rossides laid the foundations for others to build upon. At this point, I must acknowledge the influence indirectly exerted on me by Rossides. Even though I never had the good fortune to meet Rossides, he helped to shape my thinking as a London-born member of the Hellenic diaspora in the United Kingdom, who, like him, entered the legal profession, albeit as a prelude to becoming a full-time legal academic. Due to his tireless advocacy for the rule of law, Rossides inspired me to try to follow in his giant footsteps. My own efforts have not achieved as much as he did. However, they have hitherto resulted in me co-founding two initiatives in support of the rule of law in the Republic of Cyprus.

One is the Rule of Law Program of the European Regional Policy and Investment Council (ERPIC), a non-party-political think tank based in Larnaca.³⁸ The other is the Rule of Law Monitoring Mechanism in the School of Law of the Cyprus Campus of the University of Central Lancashire, known as UCLan Cyprus, my academic home since 2015.³⁹ Furthermore, through a series of articles in the Cypriot newspaper, *Simerini*, I have tried to highlight the multiple injustices which have subverted the rule of law in the Republic of Cyprus.

Closing Thoughts

In his second inauguration address, delivered on January 21, 1957, President Eisenhower declared:

We look upon this shaken earth, and we declare our firm and fixed purpose-
- the building of a peace with justice in a world where moral law prevails...
Yet this peace we seek cannot be born of fear alone: it must be rooted in
the lives of nations. There must be justice, sensed and shared by all peoples,
for, without justice the world can know only a tense and unstable truce.
There must be law, steadily invoked and respected by all nations, for without
law, the world promises only such meager justice as the pity of the strong
upon the weak. But the law of which *we* speak, comprehending the values
of freedom, affirms the equality of all nations, great and small... May the
light of freedom, coming to all darkened lands, flame brightly -- until at last
the darkness is no more.⁴⁰

Rossides, a disciple of Eisenhower, evidently absorbed these enlightened ideas and he conscientiously tried to apply them, particularly in reaction to the 'darkness' inflicted by Turkey on the Turkish-occupied north of the Republic of Cyprus. For this and for so many other reasons, his place in history is secure.

¹ Amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which has curbed my ability to make full use of archive-based and library-based sources, I have composed this article with the aim of achieving one central objective. This is to explain where Rossides fits into the history of the United States of America, the Hellenic diaspora and the Eastern Mediterranean. I should add that it constitutes an expanded adaptation of an article originally written in Greek and published by a newspaper in the Republic of Cyprus and on its website: Κλέαρχος Α. Κυριακίδης, 'Ο Ευγένιος Τ. Ρωσσίδης και το κράτος δικαίου στην Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία', *Σημερινή*, (Klearchos A. Kyriakides, 'Eugene T. Rossides and the rule of law in the Republic of Cyprus', *Simerini*), August 23 2020, 8, last accessed January 3, 2021, <https://simerini.sigmalive.com/article/2020/8/23/o-eugenios-t-rossides-kai-to-kratos-dikaiou-sten-kupriake-demokratia/>

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