



**Marathon man.** Kyriakides checking his watch in the final sprint before the finish line. As he cut through the red twine, he raised his hands aloft and cried, triumphantly: 'For Greece!'

## A Greek runner's bold marathon to help his impoverished country

BY LAURA McDOWELL  
KATHIMERINI ENGLISH EDITION

Most have heard the legend of the origin of the marathon race: While the Greeks were routing the Persians in 490 BC, a messenger, Pheidippides, was sent running to Athens to inform the city that it was safe against the invaders. When the modern Olympic Games were inaugurated in 1896, this long-distance run of 41.3 kilometers (26 miles 385 yards), the distance from the coastal town of Marathon to Athens, was included in the Olympic events, and the marathon event was born.

Officials from Boston who were spectators at the very first modern Olympic marathon race — won by the Greek Spyros Louis — took the idea home, where the Boston Marathon was inaugurated a year later, in 1897.

A recently published biography ties the ancient marathon to the modern sport and the Boston Marathon in the story of Stylianos Kyriakides, an Olympic athlete who, after the devastation of Greece in WWII, was determined to win the 1946 Boston Marathon and turn world attention to his homeland's plight.

"Running with Pheidippides" (Syracuse University Press, 2001), co-written by former Boston Globe journalist Andy Dabilis and Boston schoolteacher Nick Tsiotis, relates the incredible life story of the Greek-Cypriot miracle marathoner Kyriakides became a world-class athlete from humble origins; he tried out for a place in the Pan-Cypriot Games, and the rest, as they say, is history.

"In the Pan-Cypriot Games in March of 1934, he won the 15 hundred meters in 4:21, the 5-kilometer in 16:20, the 10-kilometer in 34:47, and the 20-kilometer, a half marathon, but he also did that in a two-day period, so dominating the competition that the national team leaders could not ignore him."

Interwoven with Kyriakides's story are the stories of other athletes, the coaches, and the early history of track and field sports in Cyprus, Greece, Eastern Europe and Boston. There are a lot of facts; the book is well "peopled" by the vibrant characters of yesteryear. And though the reader can feel a little overwhelmed by the inclusion of the names, times and placement of most of the athletes in the many races Kyriakides ran, as well as some awkwardness in structuring that information, it is these details that make the story come alive. From the compelling tale of a man's drive to compete, the book becomes most interesting with Kyriakides's participation in the Berlin Olympics, against the backdrop of rising racism and Nazi power. Here the facts are chilling, from the descriptions of the German Philhellene pageantry surrounding the Olympics to the infamous incident when Hitler, as host of the Games, refused to shake hands with the non-whites, including the black-American sprinter Jesse Owens.

As the tide of world events swept Greece into war and deprivation, Kyriakides's athletic career was cut short in its prime.

In late 1945, a half-starved and weakened Kyriakides decided, against all odds, to again take part (he ran in 1938 but didn't finish) in the Boston Marathon. On the 50th anniversary of the event on April 20, 1946, he ran not just to win, but to plead assistance for the sick and needy in war-ravaged Greece. The doctor almost eliminated him at the start, fearing he'd drop in the streets. Not to give everything away, the race itself is a heart-stopper but Kyriakides's impetus, his true grit, and his resolution to do something to help his country show the real heroism of this amazing athlete.

"Running with Pheidippides: Stylianos Kyriakides, the Miracle Marathoner" by Nick Tsiotis and Andy Dabilis is published by Syracuse University Press, and in Greek by Kedros Publishers with the title "Gennimenos Nikitis."

# The human cost of communism

Controversial 'Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression' unsettles leftists

BY HARRY VAN VERSEDAAL  
KATHIMERINI ENGLISH EDITION

You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. Breaking too many eggs, however, can be an awful strain — and if those eggs are human lives, a tragedy.

Already famous in most European countries and the United States, "The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression" is the first comprehensive attempt to estimate the number of lives taken in the effort to realize the communist utopia.

The writers of this international best seller, which was recently brought out in Greek (Hestia, 2001) have explored the previously undisclosed archives of former Soviet bloc countries to provide a detailed account of the crimes committed under communist regimes around the world over 70 years: terror, torture, famine, deportations, and mass executions.

The book reads like a criminal indictment against the Soviet Union of Stalin, the China of Mao, Kim Il Sung's Korea, Vietnam under "Uncle Ho," Cuba under Castro, Ethiopia under Mengistu, Neto's Angola, Afghanistan under Najibullah, and so on. The indictment is even more compelling as most of its contributors are former communists, who at some point realized that the road to hell was paved with good intentions.

Not surprisingly, the publication of "The Black Book of Communism" in France in 1997 instantly touched off a heated political and intellectual debate — even among its own contributors, many of whom quickly dissociated themselves from the introduction and the conclusion of the book written by Stephane Courtois. According to Nicolas Werth and Jean-Louis Margolin, Courtois's estimate of the number of victims was overblown.

The introduction to the book provides an approximation of the number of civilians murdered by communist regimes between 1917 and 1991: The Soviet Union: 20 million; China: 65 million; Vietnam: 1 million; North Korea: 2 million; Cambodia: 2 million; Eastern Europe: 1 million; Latin America: 150,000; Africa: 1.7 million; Afghanistan: 1.5 million. In total,



**Prague, August 1968.** The Soviet invasion is reminiscent of Hitler's incursion in March 1939. A young Russian soldiers a Nazi salute (photo from the book).

about 100 million people.

Contentious as these numbers may be for some, other claims made in the introduction provoked even more controversy.

### Teleology and class genocide

Courtois asserts that the high toll was no accident but a systemic element of a doctrine that promised to erase class distinctions by erasing entire classes and the people who composed them. As such, the argument goes, there is little to distinguish Lenin's and Stalin's practice of "class genocide" from Hitler's "race genocide."

Needless to say, Courtois's claim stirred fierce reactions among left-wing sympathizers who identify with the anti-fascist movement and who immediately lashed out at what they saw as Courtois's revisionism.

Dimitris Dimitrakos, who wrote the introduction to the Greek edition in which he also sets out to defend the

book against criticism from the left, endorses Courtois's opinion that crime is an inherent characteristic of communist philosophy. But what matters most, he argues, is not communist intentions or programs but the victims, both the known and unknown. To borrow a phrase from Italian writer Ignazio Silone, "Revolutions, like trees, must be judged by their fruit." In the same spirit, Dimitrakos claims that if the criminal activity that is attributed to communism derives from its totalitarian nature then there is no reason not to compare it to other totalitarian movements and regimes such as fascism and Nazism.

The book describes communist atrocities in numbing detail albeit in a sober fashion. The violent episodes, the devastation, and the social evils documented in the book illustrate how Marxism transformed itself from an empirical science into an intolerant religion, persecuting those who did not conform; how concrete reality is bent to fit a preordained scheme, enslaving

the individual; how the individual, as Camus puts it, "must bow to the laws of the class struggle as they interpret them," how, through the falsification of history, all humans receive their legitimization in fact, at the end of the dialectical communist state. Simply put, to illustrate the basic mantra of communist leaders: If the facts do not fit with the theory, well, change the facts.

Critics have argued that this single communism, but rather different versions which were implemented at different times and places, there can be no total and innate estimate of the people under communist rule (for such a count, see the "The Century of Communism," which was published in response to "The Black Book of Communism"). To this Dimitrakos adds that producing an aggregate estimate of communism does not mean denying the heterogeneity of the circumstances in which they are rather means that the crim-

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