

NEWSLETTER

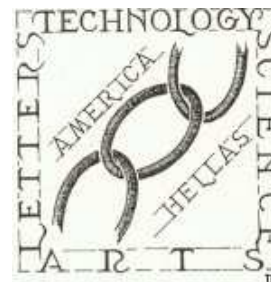
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HELLENIC LINK Midwest

A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC
LINK WITH GREECE



Upcoming Events

The Future Of The Parthenon Marbles

On Sunday, May 16, 1999, Hellenic Link Midwest presents Gwinn Owens in a lecture *Returning the Marbles: Hope and Reality*; 3:00 PM, at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 600 North State Street in Chicago. Gwinn Owens is a writer whose chance meeting with a young Greek woman in Paris in 1950 opened a new chapter in his life. She persuaded him to visit her country. He did, and fell in love with Greece. This longing for a distant land, however, was of necessity thrust aside as he worked successively as a reporter, a television writer and finally as a newspaper editor, tied down most of the time to local and national issues. During this time he was the co-author of two books, and contributed articles to Newsweek, the New York Times, the Reader's Digest, the Washington Post, the Nation, and for ten years was a weekly columnist for the Baltimore Sun.

Despite these mainly non-Greek activities, he has found spare time to visit Greece with his wife seventeen times, to write several dozen articles on his Greek experiences, and in recent years to become increasingly involved in Greek affairs. As one who was awed by the majesty of the Parthenon, the return of its treasured marbles to their homeland has become a central focus of his interest. He is now on the executive committee of the American Committee on the Parthenon and has been a consultant to the comparable British committee.

Mr. Owens will discuss how a chance meeting with a Greek woman turned an English-born German-Welsh American into a Philhellene; how he fell in love with Greece; his first unforgettable view of the Parthenon; his attempt to become Greek, and his raising a child with a Greek godmother. He will share with us his experiences of a romantic and nostalgic return to Greece - his writing about yielded a journalism award - and his meeting with the amazing Melina Mercouri, who awakened him to the issue of the Marbles. He will discuss the history of Lord Elgin, who in 1801 - 1803 removed the Marbles from the

Parthenon, his culpability, the effect of the marbles on Western European support to the

Greek independence war, and the irrelevance of the argument "We Saved the Marbles". Mr. Owens will refute the Argument of "Museum Precedent", that is, if the British are forced to return the Marbles, every museum would have to return its treasures to the country of origin. He will discuss the chances of return: what it will take to persuade Great Britain to return the Marbles? is it a problem for the British Parliament, not the British Museum, which is only the trustee? Finally, he will also discuss the plans and activities of the American Committee on the Parthenon.

In Brief

EU Funding For Greece - The Greek Economy

After marathon talks that ended on Friday March 26, 1999, the Greek prime minister, Mr. Costas Simitis, expressed satisfaction with the deal on EU funding for Greece that was agreed at the Berlin Agenda 2000 summit. Greece would receive nine trillion drachmas from structural funds over the 2000-2006 period, a 13 percent increase over allocations for the 1993-1996 period. The promised funds will enable Greece to build on developmental and social policies, including a tax reform. It is expected that over the next seven years the EU funds and national resources will allow public investments of 15 trillion drachmas, a 50 percent increase over the previous years and a contribution of five to six percent to the GDP. The Greek prime minister said that the Community funds will provide the basis for an increase in the purchasing power of the average Greek to 80 percent of the EU average, compared to a 69 percent today.

The European Commission's six month report on the economies of member-states in 1998, which was released at the end of March 1999, forecasts for Greece inflation rates of 2.1 in 1999 and 1.9 per cent in 2000. With the later rate Greece will meet one of the two remaining criteria for participation in the European Economic and Monetary Union by 2001. The other criterion is a convergence of interest rates. According to the report "the

year to year CPI (consumer price index) inflation reached 3.7 percent in January and February 1999 and is expected to decelerate further as from April when the impact of last year's devaluation will have been fully absorbed... Due to the successful implementation of accompanying measures, the deficit of the general government was 2.4 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) in 1998, in accordance with the target set in the convergence program. Government debt was reduced by 2.9 percentage points of GDP... The general government deficit in 1999 is forecast to be 2.1 percent of GDP... The primary surplus is expected to reach 6.5 percent of GDP in 1999 and 2000..."

Israel Honors Greeks As "Righteous Among The Nations"

On Monday, March 29, 1999, Israel honored several Greek citizens with the title of the "Righteous Among the Nations". Their names were added to a list of more than 200 Greeks already honored by the state of Israel for their efforts in saving the lives of persecuted Jews during the 1941-1944 German occupation of Greece. The medals were awarded by Yak Vashem, the Israeli institute devoted to "perpetuation of the memories of the heroes and martyrs" of the Jewish Holocaust during the second World War. The awards were presented by Mr. Ran Curiel, Israeli ambassador to Athens, and Mr. Moses Constantinis, the president of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, during a special event at the cultural center of the Municipality of Athens.

Opposition To Genetically Modified Crops At Greek Conference

At a press conference in Thessaloniki, Greek experts opposed the experimental cultivation of genetically modified (GM) plants in Greece. The conference was held on April 7, 1999, in view of a discussion by the Thessaloniki Prefectural Council of a request submitted by the multinational Monsanto corporation for the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) cotton and corn.

Anastasios Kovatsis, professor of Toxicology at Aristotelion University, warned that varieties in farm products may disappear and monopolies may be created in cultivation and distribution. Tassos Kourakis, professor at the university's Medical School, said that the spread of GM crops entails risks of epidemics breaking out. Finally, the prefectural council of Thessaloniki expressed its categorical opposition to any license for the experimental cultivation of GM crops in the prefecture. The prefectural councils of Serres, Imathia, Evros and Xanthi have also rejected similar applications by several companies.

Who Killed Homer ?

The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom

(A brief excerpt)

Who Killed Homer? is an impassioned call to arms from two acclaimed classicists (Victor D. Hanson, Professor of Greek at California State University, and John Heath, Associate Professor of Classics at Santa Clara University), who argue that if we loose our knowledge of the Greeks, we loose our understanding of who we are. For over two millennia in the West, familiarity with the literature, art, philosophy, and values of the Classical World has been synonymous with education itself. The traditions of the Greeks explain why Western Culture is so uniquely dynamic and why its tenets of democracy, capitalism, materialism, personal freedom, civil liberty, and constitutional government are now sweeping the globe.

Yet at precisely the moment when the world has accepted the Western paradigm, the general public in America knows less about its cultural origins than ever before, as Classical education rapidly disappears from our high school and university curricula. Modernism alone is not the culprit, rather, a new generation of Classicists - those humanists trained in the languages and literatures of Greece and Rome - forsook their responsibilities as stewards of the Western legacy. Either they saw the Classical World as shameful and exploitive and hence did their best to denigrate the Greeks, or they simply became careerists, abandoning the teaching of undergraduates in favor of esoteric and little-read academic research. Those who were to devote their lives to the Greeks have turned out to be entirely anti-Hellenic both in spirit and deed and hence have destroyed their own profession.

The failure of today's Classicists has meant that formal study of the origins of Western Culture is disappearing from American life at precisely the time when it is most needed to explain, guide, and warn the public about both the wonders and dangers of their own culture.

This book (The Free Press, 1998) investigates why the Greeks are so important and why they are so little known. It explains what has been killed, who did it and why - and how we might still save Classics and the Greeks for another generation. Why do few professors of Greek and Latin teach us that our present Western notions of constitutional government, free speech, individual rights, civilian control over the military, separation between religious and political authority, middle-class egalitarianism, private property, and free scientific inquiry are both vital to our present existence and derive from the ancient Greeks.

"The answer to why the world is becoming Westernized goes all the way back to the wisdom of the Greeks - reason enough why we must not abandon the study of our heritage. Our own implicit principles and values can be rediscovered in almost any piece of Greek literature we read - philosophy, history, oratory, drama, or poetry. Take a single example, Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone* (441 B.C), produced at the zenith of Athenian imperial power and cultural hegemony. Within a mere 1,353 lines one can detect most of the cultural assumptions of all the Greeks that we now 2,500 years later take for granted - even though Sophocles' tragedy is an exploration of civic and private morality, not a treatise on culture. In other words, a piece of Athenian literature, otherwise ostensibly unconcerned with political science or cultural studies, can serve as an effective primer to anyone curious about how we are like the Greeks in our daily lives. If we put aside for a moment the *Antigone* as great literature and examine the nuts and bolts of its underlying assumptions about man and culture, the play can be as revealing from the values it presumes as from the tensions it raises and the ideas it challenges."

From Our History

Sir John Stavridi and the British Offer of 1915. (Continued from the last issue)

This is the closing piece of excerpts from the Diary of Sir John Stavridi, presented in the article "Cyprus, the Enosis Struggle, and Greece: Sir John Stavridi and the British Offer of 1915", by John T.A. Koumoulides, Journal of Modern Hellenism, No 5 (1988).

Thursday 4th November 1915

At 2 p.m. Mr. Davies telephones to me that the Minister of Munitions wished to see me on urgent matter at 4 p.m. today and I promised to be at the Ministry punctually.

At 4 p.m. I was there. Lloyd George greeted me with the words: "Are you prepared to take a long journey?," to which I replied that, if I could do any good to Greece or England, I was ready to go anywhere. He then went on to explain that General Joffre who had been in London last week had proposed to "apply compulsion to Greece" to make her join the war, that the question had been fully discussed at a Cabinet meeting that very day and that he had proposed that, before any steps be taken, it would be better to ascertain privately the views of M. Venizelos so that the Powers could act in conformity with such views, and that he had proposed that I should go out and speak quite fully with Venizelos and cable back his advice on the subject. He added, "For once, the 21 Ministers were

unanimous, so you have an official request from the British Government to go." I told him I was highly flattered at the request, which I accepted without reserve; I, however, stated that I thought a "compulsory ally" was an impossibility, and that I did not think they ought to endeavor to force Greece to fight against her will. He said he would leave me to discuss that question with Venizelos, and the Entente Powers would follow his advice, whatever it was. I then asked, for my guidance, what was the attitude of the Entente towards Bulgaria and he replied that they had now completely "done with Bulgaria," that they would make no further overtures to her, and, in fact, would not hesitate to dismember her after the war. I again pointed out how their attitude to Bulgaria had damaged their prospects both with Greece and Serbia; I reminded him that the Prime Minister, in his speech on last Tuesday in the House, when I was present, had differentiated between Serbia's enemies by stating that she was attacked by Germany, Austria and the King of Bulgaria; that, to my mind, the Government was still playing with the Bulgarian evil, by throwing the blame on the King whilst coquetting with the people, and that this would have a very serious effect in Greece and Serbia where it would be impossible to make the people believe that the Entente Powers had altered their pro-Bulgarian policy. To this, Lloyd George replied in a whisper: "We are endeavoring to foment a revolution in Bulgaria." I told him that it was folly, that the whole army and people were heart and soul in the war on the side of the King and that only if there were a serious defeat, would the people turn against the King and that, so long as this lasted, they could not expect Greece to assist them. He replied, "Let Greece tell us that she wants the whole of the littoral of the Aegean and the whole of Thrace and we will promise it and give it to her; the only thing we cannot promise is Constantinople." He again repeated that they wanted to obtain Venizelos' opinion as to how to act, and as to whether he agreed that compulsion should be applied to the King about the intervention of Greece.

I then asked whether they had come to a decision in regard to the form compulsion would take if they decided to apply it. Lloyd George said no decision had been taken and he would like to discuss the question with Venizelos, but with a country with a seaboard like Greece, depending for her food and imports, and with so many islands, it was not very difficult for the masters of the sea to apply the form of compulsion that would be most felt and bring about a quick result. On parting, he recommended me to Eric Drummond and added, "If you have any difficulty whatever, ring me up and wherever I am, I will come to you immediately and see that the difficulties are got over so that you can leave tomorrow."

From The Riches Of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry of Odysseas Elytis

OF THE AEGEAN

Love
The archipelago
And the prow of its foam
And the seagull of its dream
On its highest mast the sailor waves
A song
Love
Its song
And the horizons of its voyage
And the echo of its nostalgia
On love's wettest rock the betrothed awaits
A ship
Love
Its ship
And the freedom from care of its etesian winds
And the jib of its hope
On its highest undulation an island rocks
The homecoming

DRINKING THE CORINTHIAN SUN

Drinking the Corinthian sun
Reading the marble ruins
Striding over vineyard seas
Aiming with my harpoon
At votive fish that elude me
I found those leaves that the psalm of the sun memorizes
The living land that desire rejoices
To open
I drink water, cut fruit
Plunge my hands through the wind's foliage
Lemon trees quicken the pollen of summer days
Green birds cut through my dreams
And I leave, my eyes filled
With a boundless gaze where the world becomes
Beautiful again from the beginning according to the heart's
measure.

MELANCHOLY OF THE AEGEAN

What coherence of soul amid the halcyons of the
afternoon!
What windcalm amid the cries of distant shores!
The cuckoo-bird amid the handkerchief of trees
And the mystic moment of the fishermen's supper
And the sea that with its accordion plays
The distant longing of a woman
The beautiful woman who bared her breasts
When memory entered the nests
And lilacs showered the sunset with fire!
With a caique with sails of the *Madonna*
They left, and with the well-wishes of the winds
All those who loved the lilies' sojourn in foreign fields
But see how night here has poured out warbling sleep
Like gurgling hair on the gleaming necks
Of vast white seashores
And how the dust of maiden dreams
Fragrant with spearmint and basil
Was scattered and brimmed on high
By the golden sword of Orion!
On three crossroads where the ancient sorceress stood
Setting the winds aflame with dry thyme
Lightly stepped the slender shadows
Each holding a jug immured with muted water
Easily as though they were going into Paradise
And from the crickets' prayers that foamed on all the fields
The beautiful ones emerged with the moon's skin
To dance on the midnight threshing floor...
O signs drifting in the depths
Of a pool that holds up a mirror
O seven small lilies that glitter
When the sword of Orion wheels round again
It shall find the bread of poverty under the lamp
But a soul on the glowing embers of the stars
It shall find huge hands branching into the infinite
Desolate seaweed, the lastborn children of the seashore
And years, green precious stones
O green stone - what storm-diviner saw you
Halting the light at the birth of day
Light at the birth of the world's two eyes