



HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

The Contribution of Classical Greece to the United States Constitution

On Sunday, February 22, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Prof Michael Seng in a lecture titled "*The Contribution of Classical Greece to the United States Constitution*". The event will take place at 3 pm at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park (southeast corner of Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road).

Most scholars and judges today trace specific constitutional clauses back to our Colonial experience, to writings of the philosophers and legal theorists of the Enlightenment, or to the various battles between the English Crown and Parliament. Rarely do they discuss Greco-Roman influences on our governmental institutions. Yet the Framers of our Constitution were classically trained. They did not have the benefits of modern archeology, but they had studied the best of the Greek and Roman philosophers and legal writers. This is true not only of well-known Classicists as Thomas Jefferson. Professor David J. Bederman, the author of a recent book on the subject, states that out of the 56 members of the Continental Congress that deliberated the Declaration of Independence, 27 had college backgrounds that stressed Classical learning and others had achieved this level of education through self-study. When they looked to alternatives to monarchy, they reached back to ancient Greece and Rome to see how a republican, democratic government should operate.

In "*The Classical Foundations of the American Constitution*," Professor Bederman tries to resurrect an interest in Classical approaches to interpreting the Constitution. Professor Michael P. Seng will discuss this book and how classical learning informed American Governmental structures, including federalism, separation of powers, a bicameral legislature, the courts, and the war and foreign affairs powers of the President and Congress.

Classical studies can assist us in analyzing many of our contemporary debates. For instance, in the recent Supreme Court decision discussing the Eleventh Amendment and whether it creates a collective or individual right to bear arms, the justices spent a lot of time discussing the Colonial experience and linguistic context of the Amendment. However, Professor Bederman argues that they might have been better served had they looked to the classical literature that the framers had studied in their childhood, "this would make the

preamble as important as the clauses that came after."

Michael P. Seng, is a professor of law at The John Marshall Law School in Chicago, Illinois. He specializes in Constitutional, Civil Rights, National Security, and Comparative Law. He is co-director of The John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center and executive director of The John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Clinic. In 2003, he was given a *Pioneers of Fair Housing Award* by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. He regularly speaks nationwide at trainings and conferences on fair housing law, and publishes on civil rights and fair housing law. He is the co-author of *Eyewitness Testimony—Strategies and Tactics*.

Professor Seng is the director of The John Marshall Law School Czech/Slovak Legal Institute, and in 2004 he received the Czernin Palace Bronze Memorial Medal from the Czech Foreign Ministry and the Masaryk Gold Metal from Masaryk University in Brno. He was a Fulbright Professor at the University of Maiduguri in Nigeria in 1983-84, has lectured in Botswana, South Africa, and China, has served as a consultant to the Economics University in Prague, and has taught at Masaryk University, and at National Chiao Tung University in Taiwan. He is the president of the Illinois Residential Mortgage Board, the president of the Council on Higher Education, which grants scholarships to American students of Czech and Slovak ancestry, and a member of the board of trustees for the Community Nutrition Network of Cook County, Illinois. Professor Seng received his B.A. and J.D. degrees from the University of Notre Dame.

Independence Day Celebration

In celebration of the Greek Independence Day, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents on Sunday March 29 at 3 pm, Yannis Simonides, in a reading/performance titled "*Women of the Revolution*". The event will be held at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park (southeast corner of Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road). Admission is free for HLM members and \$5 for non-members.

Yannis Simonides will present the legendary heroines who shaped the course of the Greek War of Independence fighting side by side with the great revolutionary heroes: *Laskarina Bouboulina*, the only female member of the Filiki Etaireia and the only female admiral of the Greek Revolutionary Navy; *Manto Mavrogenous*, who led men in battles on land and sea, spent her entire vast fortune on

the War and effectively shifted public opinion in Europe in favor of the Greek cause; *Haido of Souli* whose armed might and fame equaled that of the fierce Souliot captains, and *Alefanto of Mesolongi* who fought side by side with the men during the siege and led with them the great exodus; countless others in Chios and Psara, in Roumeli and Epirus and in the Morea, who spread terror and awe in the ranks of the Ottomans, and became the staff of legends, myths and great songs. The performance is accompanied by recorded '*kleftika tragoudia*' and a power-point presentation of images of the Revolution.

Born in Constantinople, Yannis Simonides is a Yale Drama School trained actor/writer and Emmy-winning documentary producer. He has served as professor and chair of the NYU Tisch Drama Department, as executive producer of Greek Orthodox Telecommunications (GOTelecom) and as the executive director of Hellenic Public Radio - COSMOS FM in New York. He is the founder and director of the Greek Theatre of New York and of Mythic Media, a performing arts lab. His performance work includes plays by Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Brecht, Korres, Kambanellis and others, along with solo and ensemble pieces culled from the writings of C.P. Cavafy, General Makriyannis, Nikolai Gogol and others. He co-produced Mikis Theodorakis' 75th Birthday Celebration at Lincoln Center with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and has been associated with the Annual Festival of Greek Music and Dance at Symphony Space in New York City, presented by the World Music Institute and ADAM Productions. He narrated the PBS specials *Axion Esti*, *Visions of Greece* and *Return to the Homeland*. He is touring worldwide with his solo performance in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, directed by Loukas Skipitaris and designed by Theoni V. Aldredge, and has been elected worldwide Ambassador of *Hellenism 2009* by the city of Athens - Greece.

In Brief

Draft Bill Approved for Expatriate Vote

On February 10, 2009 the inner cabinet of the Greek government approved a draft bill that gives the right to vote to Greeks that permanently reside abroad and to those that are stationed abroad, because either are working for Greek foreign services, or as employees of international organisations. They will be included in special electoral rolls to be compiled and regularly updated by Greek consulates.

They will not be able to vote for candidates standing for election in Greece but for candidates running specifically as representatives of Greeks abroad. Every party can name up to three such candidates in its state deputies list, who must reside permanently abroad for at least 10 years. This avoids problems involving the removal of seats from

regions in Greece, and ensures the representation of Greeks living outside the country.

The proposed bill will be transitional, to test the process of voting in practice. Then the government would examine the possibility of representation for specific regions abroad and voting by mail.

From Our History

Bloody December

From the book "Red Acropolis, Black Terror: The Greek Civil War And The Origins Of The Soviet-American Rivalry, 1943-1949" by Professor Andre Gerolymatos

In another part of the city, a smaller contingent of X came under fire from ELAS and, in the ensuing fight, trapped innocent bystanders and local residents. On the afternoon of 4 December, Alexander Zaousis opened the door of his apartment on 85 Solonos Street, near the University of Athens. Before he could step outside, a crescendo of gunfire and the thud of grenades forced the young Athenian back inside. The shooting went on for hours, as thirty-five young members of X were trapped in the building at 108 Solonos Street by a superior ELAS force. The ELAS fighters attempted to penetrate the building from the roof but failed to break through. For the next twenty-four hours, the two sides exchanged sniper fire, using the nearby building as cover. The local residents were caught in between and had no choice but to wait out the battle.

The situation seemed to turn worse for Alexander and his family. One group of X snipers had positioned themselves on the roof of his apartment building, and by late night he heard angry voices outside calling on the X members to surrender; otherwise ELAS would use mortars. Fortunately for Alexander, the bombardment did not take place, but his ordeal was not over. Over the next several hours, the night was punctured by the short bursts of automatic weapons, the loud pop of rifle fire, and the frantic shouts of neighbors yelling, "We are unarmed," as X or ELAS gunmen kicked down doors or came crashing through windows in a deadly game of hide-and-seek.

The next day British troops, accompanied by armored cars, arrived on the scene and were able to rescue the X survivors, but not those who had been taken prisoner and were now held as trophies by ELAS. They were able to hear their colleagues being led to safety on British army trucks, but they had no doubt about what was to be their fate. When the last truck left, clanking along the empty streets of Athens, each one of the prisoners was made to kneel down. Some crossed themselves, others simply stared blankly, and then a man stood over each one and in sequence dispatched him with a single bullet to the back of the head.

Over the next several days the fighting in Athens was sporadic and ranged from intensive firefights between armed combatants to scenes of gut-wrenching individual trauma. Rigas Rigopoulos was a remarkable young man in his early twenties who witnessed one of several spectacles of violence and death. During the occupation, he and a group of close friends had established one of the most effective espionage cells in Athens and Piraeus. For two years, he had led the double life of a spy and lived in constant terror of arrest, torture, and execution at the hands of the Axis. By the summer of 1943, the Gestapo was closing in, and Rigas had barely managed to escape to the Middle East.

In December 1944, Rigas was back home, but before he could take up his life again, Sunday's crisis hijacked the promises of liberation. On the fourth day of the Uprising, he was walking along narrow Omiros Street, which led to the much broader Panepistimiou Boulevard, when he heard the characteristic gurgling sound of a mortar shell. "Incoming missiles," he yelled and took refuge beside an iron fence. A few seconds later two mortar shells exploded, in the middle of Panepistimiou Boulevard in front of the National Bank of Greece.

Almost six decades later, sitting in the comfortable living room of his Kolonaki apartment, Rigas, with some difficulty, summons back the painful recollections of the first days of the crisis. He remembers that approximately ten people were hit: "Two British soldiers lay side-by-side, face down on the tramlines. Their brains were scattered all around. I tried to lift up a woman dressed in black. She did not appear to be wounded, but she was moaning slowly. She turned her head and died in my arms. From her open purse, a pension book fell out with pictures of her and her two small children." Rigas closed her eyes, and turning away he saw that "a young girl, dragging herself across the asphalt with her hands, was crying loudly and calling me by name. It was an acquaintance of mine from Mytilini Island. 'I can't stand up,' she was screaming. 'I can't breathe, I am going to die.' Her back was full of blood. Two other men helped me, and we carried her to the municipal hospital. She had a fragment in her spinal cord but did not die immediately. She lived for quite some time, paralyzed and in horrible pain."

Despite the passage of so many years, Rigas cannot easily excuse the actions of ELAS: "The Germans and Italians had never hit Athens, They respected the city and its historic monuments that shed light on humanity. This was not the case with ELAS. During the course of the Uprising, machine gun fire chirped from the windows and street corners. Snipers fired from behind shutters. Shells embroidered most of the facades of the houses. Every so often you heard explosions as ELAS was blowing up houses, collapsing them to block the streets.

On 5 December, General Ronald Scobie, the commander-in-chief of all Allied and Greek forces in Greece, received orders from Churchill to commit British forces and prevent the left from gaining control of Athens, Scobie issued orders to ELAS to withdraw all its units from Athens within seventy-two hours and cease attacking police stations. The KKE and EAM ignored this demand, but beyond that, they were not certain how to proceed. It may be that George Siantos, the acting head of the KKE and an influential member of EAM's central committee, was expecting that the provisional government would collapse and Papandreou would resign, opening the door to negotiations and the establishment of a new regime that would include a large number of EAM and KKE ministers. More important, the ELAS forces would then not be demobilized until a new army was established, which would be free from the influence of the right.

Papandreou did submit his resignation, but Churchill would not hear of it. He ordered Rex Leeper, the British ambassador to Greece, to "force Papandreou to stand to his duty, and assure him he will be supported by all our forces if he does so. . . . Should he resign, he should be locked up till he comes to his senses." According to Nigel Clive, at the time working for the SIS in Athens, Churchill used even stronger language and commanded Leeper to keep Papandreou as prime minister even if it meant "tying him to a chair and placing him under arrest until he changed his mind."

However, Leeper was able to persuade Papandreou to change his mind without resorting to any drastic measures. This unexpected turn of events left the KKE and its partners in EAM in a quandary. The hard-liners were adamant to continue the battle, even if this meant fighting the British. The socialist members of EAM were not convinced and argued for compromise. After hours of uncertainty and heated arguments, both sides agreed to continue the war against the provisional government but not to engage British forces. How they believed they could achieve this is not clear.

Vasilis Bartziotas, the head of the Communist Party organization in Athens, claimed after the civil war that ELAS could have taken on the British as well as the Greek government forces: "Again we had all the people of Athens with us and we would have fought in the capital for the lives of our children and for our homes." Bartziotas argued, "This was the most ideal moment. . . to strike immediately against the forces for the reaction and the British and seize power. . . . We had then for the third time—after 12 and 15 October 1944—the forces to seize power."

(To be continued)

From The Riches Of Our Cultural Heritage
From the Tragedy *Hecuba* by Euripides

Hecuba:

O helplessness of age!
Too old, too weak, to stand—
Help me, women of Troy.
Give this slave those hands
you offered to her once
when she was queen of Troy.
Prop me with your arms
and help these useless
stumbling legs to walk.
O star of morning,
light of Zeus
shining in the night!
What apparition rose,
what shape of terror stalking the darkness?
O goddess Earth,
womb of dreams
whose dusky wings
trouble, like bats, the flickering air!
Beat back that dream I dreamed,
that horror that rose in the night, those phantoms of
children,
my son Polydorus in Thrace, Polyxena, my daughter!
Call back that vision of horror!
O gods who protect this land,
preserve my son, save him,
the last surviving anchor of my house,
still holding in the snows of Thrace, still warded by his
father's friend!
Disaster I dreamed, terror on terror! Never has my
heart so shivered with fear!
O Helenus, I need you now, interpreter of dreams!
Help me, Cassandra, help me read my dreams!
I saw a little doe, a dappled doe, torn from between my
knees, cruelly ripped away, mangled by a wolf with
blood-red nails!
And then fresh terror rose:
I saw Achilles' ghost stalk upon his tomb, howling,
demanding a prize from the wretched women of
Troy.
O gods, I implore you, beat back this dream, preserve
my children!

(Chorus of captive Trojan women.)

—We come to you in haste, Hecuba.
— We left the tents...
—where the lot assigned us.
—Slaves, torn from home when Troy was burnt and
sacked
by the conquering Greeks!
—We bring you painful news.
—We cannot lighten your load.

—We bring you worse to bear.
—Just now, in full assembly, the Greek decree came
down.
—They voted your daughter must die.
—to be slaughtered alive
—on the tomb of Achilles!
—The sails had been unfurled,
and the fleet stood out to sea,
when from his tomb Achilles rose,
armor blazing, and held them back,
crying:
“Ho, Argives, where do you sail,
leaving my grave unhonored?”
—Waves of argument broke loose,
dividing Greek from Greek.
If one man spoke for death,
another spoke against it.
—On your behalf spoke Agamemnon,
lover of your daughter,
poor, mad Cassandra.
—Then the two sons of Theseus,
twin shoots of Athens, rose and spoke,
but both with one intent—
to crown Achilles' grave
with living blood, asking
if Cassandra's love meant more
than the courage of Achilles.
—And so the struggle swayed,
equally poised— Until he spoke—
that hypocrite with honeyed tongue,
that demagogue Odysseus.
And in the end he won,
asking what one slave was worth
—He wouldn't have the dead descending down to Hades
telling tales of Greek ingratitude to Greeks who fell for
Hellas
on the foreign field of Troy.
—And he is coming here
to tear your daughter from your breast and wrench her
from your arms.
—Go to the temples!
—Go to the shrines
—Fall at Agamemnon's knees!
—Call on heaven's gods!
—Invoke the gods below!
—Unless your prayers prevent her death, unless your
pleas can keep her safe, then you shall see your child,
face downward on the earth and the stain in the black
earth spread as the red blood drops
from the gleaming golden chain
that lies broken at her throat.
when laid in the balance

with the honor of Achilles.