



HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

The Myth of Equality and Citizen Militias in Archaic Greece

On Sunday, October 18, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Jonathan Hall, head of the Classics Dept. at the University of Chicago, in a lecture titled “The Myth of Equality and Citizen Militias in Archaic Greece”. 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). Admission is free for HLM members and \$5 for non-members.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the ancient Greek “polis,” or city-state, was that its citizens, largely engaged in agricultural production, were also obliged to defend their families and territory. By at least the seventh century, the Greeks had developed a mode of fighting known as “hoplite warfare,” in which densely-packed ranks (phalanges) of heavily-armed infantrymen confronted one another on level terrain outside cities. Recent scholarship has tended to view such infantrymen as equipped essentially the same (so that any individual warrior might take his place anywhere in the phalanx) and has regarded this equality of effort and risk on the battlefield as an analog to ideas of political and social equality that would, in some cities, eventually result in the establishment of democracy. One especially prominent scholar has even suggested that these citizen-militias of yeoman farmers stand at the roots of western civilization and are the archetypal model of a modern (republican) liberal democracy.

A closer study, however, of the literary and archaeological evidence suggests that it may have been misconstrued. There are many reasons to suspect that the hoplite phalanx enshrined social and economic distinctions within its ranks, rather than equality, and that this was a natural reflex of the class- and status-bound aristocracies that governed the city-states of Greece down to about the time of the first Persian invasion in 490 BCE.

Jonathan M. Hall graduated with a BA from the University of Oxford and a PhD from the University of Cambridge. He is currently the *Phyllis Fay Horton Distinguished Service* Professor in the Humanities, Professor and Chair of Classics, and Professor in the Department of History at the University of Chicago. Among his publications are *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (which won the Charles J. Goodwin Award from the American Philological Association), *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*, which won the Gordon

Laing Prize from the University of Chicago Press, and *A History of the Archaic Greek World ca. 1200-479 BCE*.

Academic Conference on the Asia Minor Catastrophe Hosted by the Pontian Society

Hellenic Link–Midwest co-sponsors an all-day conference, hosted by the Pontian Greek Society of Chicago on Saturday, November 7, at the Westin Hotel, 6100 River Road, Rosemont, IL, from 8 am to 5 pm. Attendance is free to the public if registered by Oct. 31. There is a registration fee of \$15 after Oct. 31. Lunch is \$30. The conference will focus on the Hellenic experience in Asia Minor, Pontos, and Eastern Thrace during the early part of the 20th century and the events that followed the “Megali Catastrophe”. Several scholars are scheduled to present the results of their most recent research on these events, as follows:

Dr. Taner Akcam (Associate Professor – History Dept., Clark University, Worcester, MA): *The Greek “Deportations” and Massacres of 1913-1914. A Trial Run for the Armenian Genocide*.

Dr. Constantine Hatzidimitriou (Adjunct Professor St. Johns University, NY): *Official and Unofficial American Reactions to the Asia Minor “Catastrophe”—what the Documentary Evidence Reveals*.

Matthias Bjornlund (Historian and Researcher): *Aspects of Western Sources and Interpretations of the Pontian Genocide*.

Dr. Alexander Kitroeff (Associate Professor of History, Haverford College, PA): *The Plight of the Greek Refugees After the Break-up of the Ottoman Empire*.

Dr. Van Coufoudakis (Dean Emeritus of the College of Arts and Sciences Purdue University, Indiana): *Turkey’s Deliberate and Systematic Violations of International Agreements since 1923*.

For more information, visit <http://www.pontiangreeks.org>. or call (630)303-4361.

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

A contributing factor to the estrangement between the postliberation government and the rest of society was that the political regime that now represented the state had not shared the experience of occupation. Concurrently, for

three and a half years the puppet regimes, foisted on Greece by the Axis, had gutted the credibility of government. Although individual members of the government had lived in Greece during those dark days and later made their way to the Middle East, the government as an institution, and the monarchy, operated in exile and as an institution remained alienated from the Greek world. In addition, during the occupation, contact between the Greek government-in-exile and the resistance was sporadic at best and overshadowed by the British. The SOE maintained almost exclusive control over contact with the resistance groups, further marginalizing the official representatives of the Greek state.

For the most part, the resistance supplanted the role of the state, especially the KKE-dominated EAM, by creating a civil and military infrastructure, wherever possible, and assuming the traditional trappings of governmental institutions. In the mountain communities of central and northern Greece, away from the immediate reach of the Axis, the KKE, through EAM, had established a parastate that still remained entrenched after liberation. As a result, in December 1944, Greece was shared by two societies: the small mountain villages that enjoyed a measure of freedom from the Axis, and the left-wing resistance underground groups in the larger cities. In contrast, large segments of urban dwellers as well as parts of the Peloponnese remained loyal to traditional authority and hostile to the KKE and its front organizations. These two faces of Greece effectively confronted each other over the next thirty-three days and continued to remain segregated long after the end of the fighting.

Despite these cleavages and mistrust, the question remains: Was the bloodletting of December inevitable? The spark that set off the chain of events that led to Sunday's demonstration and killings was the failure or inability of the Papandreou government to balance the problems of security and the strategic interests of the British against the suspicions of the left. The critical issue was control of the Greek army and police forces. The side that commanded the military and security apparatus would also dominate the state. The KKE and EAM had proposed that all armed forces in Greece be demobilized and a new army be created by conscripting eligible men from the general population. In practical terms this meant that the ELAS guerrillas, as well as any other resistance bands, would turn in their arms and return home. At the same time, the Greek government would order the Third Mountain Brigade and the Sacred Company to disband.

The Papandreou government, with the exception of the EAM and KKE ministers, was reluctant to lose the only two loyal military formations at its disposal. The British, for their part, were not prepared to surrender to the KKE and EAM any military or political advantage. Churchill and the British Foreign Office were suspicious of all resistance organizations in Greece and viewed them as

radical and revolutionary groups that would undermine the traditional establishment in the country as well as threaten British interests in the region. For Churchill, only the return of the Greek monarchy would guarantee stability and legitimacy.

Although this claim is not substantiated by any documentation, some historians as well as postwar accounts of these events claim that Papandreou at one point agreed to disband the Third Mountain Brigade and the Sacred Squadron but was prevented from doing so by the British. There is no doubt that Churchill was opposed to this disbanding and had written to the Foreign Office that " ... the disbandment of the Greek Brigade would be a disaster of the first order." The Foreign Office, in turn, had transmitted Churchill's view to Leeper, the British ambassador in Athens, who passed it on to the Greek prime minister. Papandreou was inclined to accept the demobilization of all volunteer units but was unable to convince either the British or the right-wing elements in and out of the government

On 28 November, the three EAM ministers (Ioannis Zevgos, Alexander Svolos, and Ilias Tsirimokos) in the provisional government, at the suggestion of Papandreou, proposed another compromise in which the new army would consist of one brigade of ELAS, another of equal strength to be recruited from the Third Mountain Brigade, the Sacred Squadron, and EDES—all other Greek forces would be disbanded by 10 December. The cabinet accepted the compromise, but twenty-four hours later, on 29 November, Zevgos, one of the EAM ministers, returned to Papandreou's office, accused him of bad faith, and withdrew the offer, demanding once again that all forces be disbanded, including the Third Mountain Brigade and the Sacred Squadron. What caused this about-face is not clear. The explanation provided by the KKE and EAM is that they withdrew their consent because Papandreou was planning to trick them, by excluding the Third Mountain Brigade and the Sacred Squadron from the total strength of the proposed new brigades. Papandreou rejected the KKE's demands outright.

Another explanation for the December Uprising is that it was a show of strength organized by George Siantos, the acting general secretary of the KKE. Siantos gambled that the small number of British forces in Greece, as well as the Third Mountain Brigade and the Sacred Squadron, would not have been sufficient to prevent ELAS from gaining control of and dominating Athens, which effectively meant dominating all of Greece. If that was the case, it is not clear why the KKE leadership decided to handicap its effort by committing only the reserve elements of ELAS in Athens, while the most experienced and best equipped units were kept away from the capital during the first critical weeks of the fighting. All accounts agree that the December Uprising was triggered by the

clash between the demonstrators and the police on that fateful Sunday, but the recourse to a full-scale war, rather than just an attempt at retaliation by the left, is more complicated. It is all the more remarkable because the communists had accepted a compromise that had enabled the British to send forces into Greece after the German withdrawal, as well as the decision of the KKE and EAM to participate in a provisional government led by George Papandreou.

On 26 September 1944 in Caserta, Italy, the Greek Government of National Unity along with all the resistance organizations had concluded an agreement to facilitate the transition from occupation to liberation, which also included that all guerrilla bands and Allied forces in Greece would be placed under Scobie's command for the duration of the war or until a new Greek army was established. With the stroke of a pen, the KKE and the other left-wing organizations had surrendered their military advantage in Greece and handed over control of the country to their opponents.

In the summer of 1944, the KKE-dominated ELAS numbered over 50,000 well-armed men and women and could have easily opposed the landing of British troops in Greece. Under these circumstances, the British would have been obliged either to fight ELAS after the Germans left, creating a public relations nightmare for Churchill as well as for the Allies, or to accept the inevitable and leave the KKE in control of the country.³³ Either option presented serious difficulties, but ultimately the KKE, thanks to Soviet intervention, went along with the Caserta Agreement.

The Soviet contribution to the sticky negotiations between the British and the Greek Government of National Unity with the KKE and the left-wing resistance took place in the Middle East and culminated, according to some sources, with the sudden arrival of a Russian military mission, headed by Colonel Grigori Popov, to occupied Greece on the night of 25 July 1944. For several months following the winter of 1944, the Soviets and the British were working toward developing some type of compromise over their mutual interests in the Balkans, pending the German pullout from the region. The only drawback to a potential Soviet-British understanding was whether the United States would accept the division of the region into spheres of influence.

During the negotiations, the Soviet embassy in Cairo was gingerly trying to send a message to the KKE that the Russians preferred an amicable resolution of the Greek situation. In July 1944, Nikolai Novikov, the Soviet ambassador in Cairo, recommended to Svolos, the head of the PEEA (Political Committee of National Liberation), that EAM should join the Greek Government of National Unity. The same message was conveyed to Petros Rousos, the KKE representative in Cairo, by the Soviet attaché, who was told to make sure that the ambassador's view

was transmitted to the left-wing resistance in Greece.

In a recent analysis, Peter Savakis states that once the Soviets received direct confirmation of American willingness to accept a British-Soviet agreement over the Balkans, it became essential for Stalin to make sure that the KKE did not disrupt the delicate horse trading between the Allies. Stavrakis suggests, "A plausible hypothesis is that Stalin felt compliance would be guaranteed only by the dispatch of a military mission to the partisan strongholds in the mountains of Greece, to present the KKE with direct instructions to adopt a more conciliatory policy."

At the very least, the Popov mission to the KKE and ELAS underscored the Russian ambivalence toward the Greek communists while its presence in Greece alarmed and surprised the British. Previously, in a gesture of Allied solidarity, the British had invited the Soviets to join the Allied military mission to the Greek resistance, but the Russians declined. Despite earlier indications that the Soviets were prepared to reach an accommodation over the Greek issue, the arrival of the Popov mission came unexpectedly, catching the British unprepared. The Soviets had flown from Yugoslavia to an Anglo-American base in Barri, Italy, and then asked permission from the British authorities to make a test flight over the Adriatic. Instead, once in the air, the Russian plane proceeded to Greece and landed on a makeshift airfield in Neraidia, western Thessaly, near the location of the ELAS headquarters and the headquarters of the KKE. The Greek communists were jubilant, but after the initial celebrations and talks with Popov, they quickly became downcast.

The unwillingness or inability of the Soviets to replace the British as the arsenal of the left-wing resistance was a severe blow to the Greek communists. The KKE, through its newspaper, Rizospastis, had been exalting the success of the Red Army against the Germans and was anticipating that in a matter of time the Russians would liberate the Balkans and Greece. No doubt for many of the KKE leadership the arrival of the Soviet mission was a prelude to a Soviet advance on Greece, but Popov's cool reaction to their enthusiasm dashed any hopes of Soviet liberation.

Indeed, all of the published accounts of the Greek communists who wrote about the Popov Mission agree that the Russian delegation discouraged any notions of the KKE using ELAS to take over the country. Vasos Georgiou, the editor of Rizospastis, and a principal assistant to George Siantos, provides recent testimony about these events and, in a roundabout way, conveys the elation and eventual disappointment generated by the arrival of the Soviets:

We waited for them [the Soviets] with great anticipation and we welcomed them very warmly in the early afternoon, as the real liberators. (To be continued)

From The Riches Of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry by Μαρία Πολυδούρη

Γιατί μ' αγάπησες

Δεν τραγουδώ παρά γιατί μ' αγάπησες
στα περασμένα χρόνια
και σε ήλιο σε καλοκαιριού προμάντεμα
και σε βροχή σε χιόνια
δεν τραγουδώ παρά γιατί μ' αγάπησες

Μόνο γιατί με κράτησες στα χέρια σου
μιά νύχτα και με φίλησες στο στόμα,
μόνο γι' αυτό είμαι ωραία σαν κρίνο ολάνοιχτο
κ' έχω ένα ρίγος στην ψυχή μου ακόμα,
μόνο γιατί με κράτησες στα χέρια σου.

Μόνο γιατί τα μάτια σου με κοίταξαν
με την ψυχή στο βλέμμα,
περήφανα στολίστηκα το υπέρτατο
της ύπαρξης νου στέμμα,
μόνο γιατί τα μάτια σου με κοίταξαν

Μόνο γιατί όσο πέρναα με καμάρωσες
και στη ματιά σου να περνάη
είδα τη λυγερή σκιά μου ως όνειρο
να παίζη, να πονάη,
μόνο γιατί όπως πέρναα με καμάρωσες.

Γιατί δισταχτικά σα να με φώναξες
και μου άπλωσες τα χέρια
κ' είχες μέσα στα μάτια σου το θάμπωμα
—μια αγάπη πλέρια,
γιατί δισταχτικά σα να με φώναξες,

Γιατί, μόνο γιατί σε σέναν άρεσε
γι' αυτό έμεινεν ωραίο το πέρασμά μου.
Σα να μ' ακολουθούσες όπου πήγαινα,
σα να περνούσες κάπου εκεί σιμά μου.
Γιατί, μόνο γιατί σε σέναν άρεσε.

Μόνο γιατί μ' αγάπησες γεννήθηκα,
γι' αυτό η ζωή μου εδόθη.
Στην άχαρη ζωή την ανεκπλήρωτη
μένα η ζωή πληρώθη.
Μόνο γιατί μ' αγάπησες γεννήθηκα.

Μονάχα γιά τη διαλεχτήν αγάπη σου
μου χάρισε η αυγή ρόδα στα χέρια.
Γιά να φωτίσω μιά στιγμή το δρόμο σου
μου γέμισε τα μάτια η νύχτα αστέρια,
μονάχα γιά τη διαλεχτήν αγάπη σου.

Μονάχα γιατί τόσο ωραία μ' αγάπησες
έζησα, να πληθαίνω
τα ονειράτά σου, ωραίες που βασίλεψες
κ' έτσι γλυκά πεθαίνω
μονάχα γιατί τόσο ωραία μ' αγάπησες

Becausd You Loved Me

I sing only because you loved me
years ago.

In sunshine, in summer's premonition,
in rain, in snow,

I sing only because you loved me.

Only because you held me in your arms
and kissed me on the mouth one night,
only for this I am as lovely as a lily in bloom
and my soul still feels a shiver of delight
only because you held me in your arms.

Only because your eyes gazed at me
with your soul in your glance,
I adorned myself proudly with the supremest
crown of my existence
only because your eyes gazed at me.

Only because you admired me as I passed by
and in your eyes I saw swaying
my svelte shadow, like a dream,
feeling pain, playing,
only because you admired me as I passed by.

Because it was as if I hesitated as you called me
and you extended your arms to me
and in your eyes you had that dazzle,
a love full and free,
because it was as if I hesitated as you called me.

Because, only because it pleased you
my passing stayed lovely;
As if you kept pursuing me wherever I went,
as if you kept passing somewhere near me,
because, only because it pleased you.

Only because you loved me was I born,
this is why my life was granted.
In this joyless, unfulfilled life
my life was fulfilled
Only because you loved me was I born.

Only because of your unique love
the dawn with roses graced my arms.
To lighten your road for a moment
night filled my eyes with stars,
only because of your unique love.

Only because you loved me so well
I have lived to multiply
your dreams set like the sun
and so sweetly I die
only because you loved me so well.