



# HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

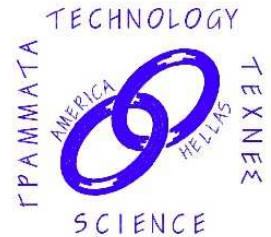
A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

No. 72, April–May 2010

EDITORS: Constantine Tzanos, S. Sakellarides

<http://www.helleniclinkmidwest.org>

22W415 McCarron Road - Glen Ellyn, IL 60137



## Upcoming Events

### Music Performance by “Balkanalia”

On Sunday, April 18 at 3 pm, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents the music ensemble “Balkanalia” at the great hall of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, 2350 East Dempster Street, Des Plaines, IL (just east of I-294). General admission is \$5.

Balkanalia’s program will include songs and dance tunes from Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Armenia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. All of the songs are sung in their original language.

*Balkanalia*, the University of Illinois Balkan Music Ensemble, was created in 1997–98 by Donna A. Buchanan, Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology and a specialist in Balkan (particularly Bulgarian) musical styles, under the dual sponsorship of the School of Music and Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center. Participants include musically gifted graduate and undergraduate students majoring in a variety of disciplines, as well as Illinois alumni and community members.

The ensemble performs village, urban, and popular styles of traditional music from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey and occasionally, parts of the Caucasus and Arab Middle East on indigenous, orchestral, and electronic instruments. Songs are sung in the original languages by soloists and/or the ensemble’s women’s choir. *Balkanalia* is also closely associated with the “Balkan Performing Arts Society,” a campus-wide registered student organization dedicated to promoting and performing expressive culture from across the Balkan region.

### Greece and the Mediterranean: Cultural Geography and National Identity

On Sunday, May 23, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Professor Marinos Pourgouris of Brown University, in a lecture titled “*Greece and the Mediterranean: Cultural Geography and National Identity*”. The event will be held 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.

Though the Mediterranean has emerged, in the past couple of decades, as an intriguing field of study, ethnographers have long disputed the idea of approaching

the region as a collective entity. The problem is one of definition: how can the Mediterranean—many languages and dialects—be defined as a “cultural area” as opposed to, simply, a “geographical entity” (i.e. the various countries that surround the Mediterranean Sea)?

What is often neglected in this tension between culture and geography is the position of the Mediterranean in a collective imaginary trajectory that was, in some cases, central to a process of identity construction (national, political, cultural and literary). This lecture will focus on the interaction among Mediterranean intellectuals (Odysseus Elytis, George Seferis, Albert Camus, and others) and their attempt to forge a Mediterranean aesthetic in opposition to the Northern European one. In the same way that many Western Modernists, reacting to what they perceived as an ideologically bankrupt Western civilization, turned to the East or to Africa for inspiration, others sought models in a Mediterranean orientation. Though such explorations were often colored by exoticist, orientalist, or highly aestheticized imaginings, their importance in redefining the cultural scene in particular geographical areas in the Mediterranean has been crucial. (Such an examination of collective identity is particularly intriguing in light of the ongoing attempts by the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, to create a “Mediterranean Union.”)

The lecture will especially focus on Greece and its own relationship to the Mediterranean as it emerges through literary and cultural definitions. Of particular interest is the comparison of a Greek Mediterranean identity with other cultural geographies in Greece such as the Balkans and Europe.

*Marinos Pourgouris* completed his doctoral degree in the Department of Comparative Literature at Rutgers University and is currently Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Brown University. He is also affiliated with the Modern Greek Studies Program and the Watson Institute of International Studies at Brown. His forthcoming book, *Mediterranean Modernisms: The Poetic Metaphysics of Odysseus Elytis* examines Greek modernism in a comparative context (in relation to philosophical, psychoanalytic and literary modernist currents). His current book-project is an exploration of ethnicity and national literatures in the post-structural context. He has published articles on a variety of authors and subjects including the work of Nikos Kazantzakis and Odysseus Elytis, Greek Modernism, Ethnic identity, and the theories of Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and

Rey Chow. At Brown he teaches courses on the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Greek and European Modernism, National Identity, and psychoanalysis.

## ***In Brief***

### **A Scene from the Life of Modern Athens**

According to the Greek newspaper *Kathimerini* (3/11/2010), a 35-year-old man, Lambros Fountas, was killed during a shootout with police in the southeastern Athens neighborhood of Dafni. It was said that he had been involved in Greece's domestic terrorist activities. Fountas was shot dead at 4.40 a.m., when he and an accomplice were attempting to steal a parked vehicle.

Fountas had been known to police since he was arrested during disturbances at the National Technical University of Athens in 1995. He allegedly had contacts with members of the Exarchia-based anarchist movement and had been on the anti-terrorist squad's watch list for a long time.

The suspect with whom Fountas was allegedly attempting to steal the car managed to evade arrest but based on forensic tests police believe that the second man had taken part in a recent attack carried out by the "Revolutionary Struggle". The urban guerrilla group has carried out a number of attacks in recent years, including firing a rocket-propelled grenade at the US Embassy, murdering a witness protection officer and detonating a car bomb outside the Athens Exchange. Sources suggested that the two men had been stealing the car to use it in an imminent strike.

According to the police, the two suspects had already broken into the Seat Ibiza when a patrol car pulled up a short distance away. One of the officers turned on the siren, prompting Fountas and his accomplice to jump out of the vehicle and begin shooting at the policemen. The officers took cover behind their patrol car and, in the ensuing exchange of fire, the 35-year-old was killed.

A Zastava handgun, with two bullets missing from the chamber, and an assault grenade were found in his possession. He was also carrying a walkie-talkie and wearing two pairs of leather gloves.

### **Selection of SAIC/Siemens Allegedly Fixed**

The parliamentary examination committee investigating the Siemens case heard recently the testimony of Pavlos Pezas, former representative of the Franco-American company TRS (Thales-Raytheon Systems).

TRS was the company that lost the bidding competition for providing electronic security systems (C4I) for the Athens Olympics to the joint venture of SAIC/SIEMENS which was finally awarded the contract for a fee of 250 million euros.

In his deposition, Mr. Pezas characterized the bidding

competition as suspect and the selection of SAIC/Siemens more or less fixed in advance. He said that on February 28, 2003, he sent a letter to then-prime minister Constantine Simitis where he was citing all the manipulations by SAIC/SIEMENS that violated Presidential Order 284 governing the bidding process. According to the witness, the company he represented had submitted a better bid offer but the decision had been made in advance.

Replying to a question by SYRIZA parliament member Demetre Papadimoulis he stated that to his opinion bribes changed hands in this case, because "there are always bribes involved in large public projects and purchases of weapons systems".

According to KKE parliament member Athanasios Pamfilis the witness' deposition raises a concern (corroborated one day earlier by another witness, George Trepeklis) about the procurement process for the C4I system, since the delivered system was not the same as what was originally decided.

### **Vatopedi Scandal**

According to *Kathimerini* (3/2/2010) it was alleged that all the documents kept by the Agricultural Development Ministry relating to the controversial property exchange between the state and the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos have disappeared. Speaking to Sky TV, the ministry's general secretary George Kanellopoulos claimed that the documents, some 1,500 in total, had been taken by the former head of the land department Stamatina Manteli. Kanellopoulos said that Manteli, who is a suspect in the allegedly corrupt deal, took the papers when she left her job at the ministry.

### **Hazardous Professions in Greece**

*New York Times*, 3/12/2010: Vasia Veremi, a hairdresser in Athens, under the current law that treats her job as hazardous to her health, has the right to retire with a full pension at age 50. "I use a hundred different chemicals every day—dyes, ammonia, you name it," she said. "You think there's no risk in that? People should be able to retire at a decent age," Ms. Veremi added. "We are not made to live 150 years."

The Greek government has identified at least 580 job categories deemed to be hazardous enough to merit retiring early—at age 50 for women and 55 for men. Greece's retirement system has contributed to the out-of-control state spending that has led to its current debt crisis. Greece has promised early retirement to about 700,000 employees, or 14 percent of its work force, giving it an average retirement age of 61, one of the lowest in Europe.

The law covers under "dangerous jobs" radio and television presenters, claiming to be at risk from the

bacteria on their microphones, and musicians playing wind instruments, who must contend with gastric reflux as they puff and blow.

Countries like Germany, France, Spain and Italy have relied for decades on a generous state financed by a range of stiff taxes to keep the political peace. Now, governments are being pressed to re-examine their commitments to generous pensions over extended retirements because the downturn has pushed at least part of these hidden costs to the surface.

Analysts say that the United States will face its own fiscal reckoning as 78 million baby boomers begin drawing on Social Security and Medicare programs. Without some combination of higher taxes, benefit reductions or an increase in the retirement age, both programs will run short of money within the next few decades. Many American states are behind on funding their pension obligations for public employees.

In Europe, unfunded pension liabilities far outweigh the stated debt that governments owe creditors. According to Jagadeesh Gokhale, an economist at the Cato Institute in Washington, bringing Greece's pension obligations onto its balance sheet would show that the government's real debt is 875 percent of its gross domestic product. That would be the highest debt level among the 16 nations of the eurozone, and far above Greece's official debt level of 113 percent.

In France, the official debt level is 76 percent of economic output, but the total debt rises to 549 percent once all of its current pension promises are taken into account. And in Germany, the current debt level of 69 percent would soar to 418 percent.

Mr. Gokhale estimates that for the United States the true measure of federal government debt, incorporating Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other obligations, is \$79 trillion, or about 500 percent of the nation's output. Currently, its public debt is equal to about 60 percent of its domestic output.

In its 2009 annual report on Greece, the International Monetary Fund warned that the government's excessive pension and health payments to the elderly, if left unchecked, would result in a debt level of 800 percent of its output by 2050, similar to the figures Mr. Gokhale calculated. "The pension crisis is the biggest single test of Greece's willingness to tackle longstanding reform," said Kevin Featherstone, an expert on the Greek political economy at the London School of Economics. "Any meaningful reform must lead to reduced benefits for workers — the government needs to show that it can overcome union pressure."

Greece has proposed raising average retirement age to 63.

The French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, has met with union leaders and broached the prospect of raising the

normal retirement age from 60. Spain is proposing to raise the retirement age from 65 to 67. Germany, has taken politically difficult steps to increase its retirement age to 67 while reducing benefits.

Greece's pension problem far outweighs the finagling with its accounts that it relied upon in the early 1990s to get its official deficit figures low enough to qualify to join the euro club. A recent report by the European Commission found that the amount Greece spends on pensions and health care for its aging population, if left unchecked, would soar to about 37 percent of its economic output by 2060 from just over 20 percent today, making it the highest level in Europe.

"Projected pension expenditures are expected to double," said Manos Matsaganis, a professor at the University of Athens and author of numerous papers on Greece's pension system. "That is unsustainable." Still, the millions who have come to rely on these payouts will not give up their pensions easily. "Nobody thinks they have to be the one to sacrifice," Mr. Matsaganis said. That's certainly true of Christos Bourdakis, a retired government accountant, who collects a yearly gross pension of 30,000 euros more than he was making when he retired 13 years ago at the age of 60. He has even written a book in defense of it, "The Guide to Granting Civil Service Pensions in Greece." "We have to protect our standard of living," Mr. Bourdakis said.

## ***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*

At the very least, the KKE made a concerted effort to destroy all rival Marxist organizations, and during the course of the December Uprising, OPLA hit squads killed dozens of members of the rival Archeiomarxists organization as well as followers of Trotsky. The Archeiomarxists originally formed a secret group within the Socialist Labor Party, which later became the Greek Communist Party. In 1924, the KKE expelled the Archeiomarxists, who, in turn, went on to establish their own political party. Their membership, during the interwar period, often surpassed that of the KKE.

Another consideration is that such vicious policies were born out of fear. By the third week of December, even the most optimistic Greek communist must have realized that it was no longer possible to overcome the British defenses in the center of Athens and that it was only a matter of time before ELAS would concede defeat.

The highpoint of the ELAS advance against the British and Greek forces in Athens came on the night of 15-16 December 1944. After the collapse of any prospect for a diplomatic settlement with the British and the Papandreou

government, ELAS prepared for an all-out offensive against the British positions in the center of Athens. The objective was to overwhelm the enemy by striking simultaneously against the British defenses from three different directions. Concurrent assaults were a difficult feat for well-trained and disciplined armies, but next to impossible for the haphazardly organized ELAS forces. When ELAS launched the attacks on the night of 15–16 December, the assaults were not synchronized, and the British were able to defeat them piecemeal. During the course of the battle, British armored cars and tanks easily shifted from one sector to another, giving the hard-pressed infantry additional firepower at critical moments in the fighting.

ELAS troops, on the other hand, did manage to break through on the east flank of the British lines. In the late night of 13 December, about 1,000 ELAS troops stormed the area of the Infantry Barracks, which were the quarters of the British armored brigade and a few other units. The ELAS unit succeeded in penetrating very close to the barracks by using troops dressed in British and Greek police uniforms. By the time the defenders realized the ruse, ELAS had captured half the barracks, but instead of trying to capture the British artillery and mortars, they diverted their attention to burning and looting the supply dump as well as killing the civilian radio operators. In the morning the Second Battalion, supported by armor, cleared the barracks, inflicting heavy losses on ELAS.

Once again, however, rumors of ELAS atrocities were further chipping away at the presumed moral superiority that the left-wing forces had enjoyed from the beginning of the battle. This time a story was circulating among the soldiers of the Fourth Division that the body of a noncommissioned officer of the Parachute Brigade attached to them had been found in a horrible state. The man had had his legs and arms cut off and then was buried alive. The paratroopers became outraged, and although they had taken over 120 ELAS prisoners in the previous engagement, after this alleged atrocity the number of prisoners fell off considerably.

Despite the determination of ELAS to capture the barracks and the high casualties this engagement inflicted on both sides, the attack failed. Although ELAS enjoyed numerical superiority and was fighting on familiar ground, it could not successfully make the transition from guerrilla warfare to conventional battle. As long as ELAS had engaged in hit-and-run, sniping, sabotage, and other irregular tactics, it could inflict significant losses on the British and hope to bring about a political outcome to the December Uprising.

The failure of the ELAS offensive spelled the end of any prospects for a military victory in Athens and hence the collapse of the left's effort to influence events in Greece. From this point, Scobie's forces grew stronger, with the increasing flow of reinforcements, while those of ELAS

grew progressively weaker each passing day. Toward the third week of December, two new British divisions as well as a brigade of the Fourth Indian Division and several miscellaneous units arrived in Phaliron Bay and began the process of relieving the beleaguered British forces in Athens. A new officer, Major-General "Ginger" Hawkesworth, was given command of the new forces as well as operational control of all the British and Greek government units. Except for rushing to the rescue of a sector under immediate threat and slowly opening a link with the center of Athens, Hawkesworth's corps did not launch an all-out offensive.

The storm of criticism in Britain as well as in the international community over British intervention in Greece had forced Churchill to attempt a compromise resolution of the crisis with EAM-ELAS. Churchill, joined by Anthony Eden, the foreign secretary, made the difficult journey to Athens on Christmas Day to preside over a conference that included representatives of the Papandreou government, the KKE, EAM, and ELAS.

The meeting took place in the Greek foreign ministry from 26 to 27 December, in a bleak room with no heat and lit by hurricane lamps, while sporadic gunfire accompanied the proceedings.

Unfortunately, none of the parties saw any reason to make serious concessions and reach any kind of agreement to end the fighting. The British terms remained the same—ELAS had to disarm and evacuate Athens and the surrounding area. For their part, the KKE-EAM-ELAS delegates remained intransigent, and refusing to concede defeat, they did not accept the British demands. Furthermore, they insisted on a predominant role in any coalition Greek government. It may be that they did not appreciate the scale of British reinforcements or were counting on international pressure, especially from the Americans and Soviets, to force Churchill to accept a compromise that left them with ELAS intact and in control of Athens.

The conservative politicians, but especially the royalists and the ultra-right-wing cabals that had emerged during the uprising, were not in a hurry to see the British stop demolishing EAM-ELAS. When the conference began, some of them tried to walk out rather than sit with the "bandits" and were only prevented from doing so by the British. They were not to be disappointed. After fruitless negotiations for over two days, the meeting broke down. The only point of agreement was the future appointment of Archbishop Damaskinos as regent, pending the outcome of a referendum on the future of the Greek monarchy. It fell on Churchill, upon his return to London on 29 December, to convince a very reluctant George II to accept the Greek cleric as regent. It was not a pleasant task for Churchill, who, according to Roy Jenkins, "had to spend half the night (with Eden) bludgeoning the stubborn Greek King into accepting a regency."

Eventually, Churchill had to tell George II that "if he did not agree the matter would be settled without him and that we would recognize the new Government instead of him."

In the meantime, some of the communist political leadership chose to grapple with the inevitable consequences of military defeat by a means so terrible that afterward even the most stalwart defenders of EAM-ELAS were hamstrung to find excuses for the conduct of the left. In a fit of shortsightedness the KKE decided to take hostages in order to incarcerate and punish collaborators (who the left claimed had been allowed to remain at large and protected by the Papandreou government) and as retaliation for the prisoners taken by the British and the Greek government forces. The fateful decision was taken around the middle of December, in a secret meeting of senior communist leaders at the home of Mitsos Partsalidis, secretary of EAM's central committee. Partsalidis' house was out of the way and set within a large garden, an ideal location for confidential discussions. Only a few of those present opposed this drastic action, and afterward orders were given to EAM-ELAS as well as the various organs of the KKE, such as OPLA and the National Civil Guard, to round up hostages. A quarter of a century later, Kaiti Zevgou, who had taken part in the decision, wrote in her memoirs: "Instead of sitting down and analyzing which people should be taken and under what conditions, some of our members, at times, simply set an artificial number and filled it. Many mistakes were made, which considerably damaged our reputation. We are still paying today for these consequences."

A little later, Zevgou had an opportunity to see the consequences of her decision as well as that of her colleagues:

*One day I was on the road to the party headquarters at Chasia and shared a ride with Chrysa (a member of the KKE's Central Committee). I could see something in the distance moving like a snake on the ground. A few moments later we understood it was a column of hostages, which was coming from the direction we were going. Both Chrysa and I were shocked. We turned our heads the other way and remained silent. The spectacle was unsettling. A column of people exhausted and worn out by fatigue with despair on their faces, herded by armed guards on the other side of the column. I still remember that the head of the column was a very old man who was barely dragging his feet. As I said above, it was one of the mistakes of the movement. The reaction (the Right) exploited such mistakes to cover up the orgy of terror that spilled out after December and continues, whenever it can, until today and will not allow the national schism to end.*

The voices of the victims, however, are rarely heard above the din of recriminations and finger pointing over the December Uprising. Despina Makka-Photiadi was a

proud woman devoted to her family, friends, and the close society of Athens. She came from a family of well-to-do professionals, who ensured she received an excellent liberal education, and she could speak German, English, French, and some Italian. In the great debate over monarchy, she remained for the rest of her life a committed Venizelist and opposed the return of the king. In 1940–1941, she was a volunteer nurse, and during the occupation she labored in the soup kitchens of the Greek Red Cross. Effectively, Despina's liberalism and antimonarchism did not set her too far apart from the general goals of EAM. Her daughter had been a member of the left-wing organization for one year. Her reward for surviving the famine and the exigencies of foreign occupation was to be taken as a hostage by the KKE. Toward the end of her life she decided to compile her experiences as an attempt to make sense of that terrible ordeal.

Her poignant account begins with the joy of liberation, which was all too brief, and the outbreak of the December Uprising. From her home in Psychiko, a suburb of Athens, she and her friends could only get snippets of news of the events in Athens. In the first week of December, Despina noticed that some acquaintances who were members of EAM started acting strangely, and one of them warned her daughters to leave as soon as possible. After 20 December, Despina to her horror watched as the Communist National Civil Guard started rounding up men and a little later also women as hostages. Her turn came a few days later. A group of ELAS men came to her, and when she inquired what they wanted, they replied, "You and your two daughters." The men then said, "You have five minutes to get ready, bring two blankets and if you have food ready bring it along." From this point on, life as Despina and her family understood it vanished; she and her daughters became hostages at the whim and mercy of the KKE:

*They organized us in a column of three across, the men were placed ahead of the women and we proceeded along Kiphisias Boulevard. The sky darkened and a light rain began to fall. As we headed towards the mountains a strong wind began to flail our faces but the guards yelled at us to move faster. We passed the suburbs of Galatsi and Kypseli and only when we reached a small town in the late evening, they stopped and allowed us to rest on the sidewalks and on the ground. There we sat in the cold December night. Eventually, they led us to an abandoned community center where we spent the night.*

Despina and her daughters, along with dozens of other women, were forced to walk for days. At first, they left behind well-known suburbs northwest of Athens, and then they headed further north into unknown parts of the hinterland past small villages in the mountains. In some places, the locals were kind and offered the hostages what little food or milk they could spare. As they moved from place to place, the column grew longer. The guards had

little sympathy for the hostages, and whether they were old, young, pregnant, handicapped, or sick, those who could not join the column were shot, stabbed, or on some occasions beaten to death.

A group of Royal Air Force prisoners, who fared little better under ELAS captivity, witnessed one of these wretched civilian columns: "Mostly old and elderly men, women and children, they were all scantily clad and most without shoes. Some were leaving bloody footprints in the snow. Like drunken cowboys urging on a herd of cattle, their guards repeatedly fired shots over their heads. An old man collapsed moaning. He was shot and thrown into a ditch." Nicolaedis Fotis, an architect at the Athens Town Hall, was one of the hostages, and he remembers, "We were compelled to march thirty miles a day. Children were taken from their mothers because they were unable to keep up." He saw two women murdered, the first because she had hidden thirty gold sovereigns in her clothing and the second because she failed to make that known to the guards,

For Despina and her daughters, the ordeal came to an end in the first week of January, when both sides began negotiating a truce, but for some of the other hostages the agony went on until the end of the month. After the collapse of the talks on 26–27 December, General Hawkesworth launched a major offensive on 3 January 1945 that drove ELAS from Athens in just two weeks. On 11 January 1945, delegates from ELAS met with General Scobie and asked for an armistice. ELAS agreed to evacuate Athens and Boiotia as well as fall back twenty-five miles from Thessaloniki. Although Scobie and Hawkesworth preferred to push their offensive until ELAS was completely destroyed, political considerations and events beyond their control spared the left the humiliation of total collapse. The German Ardennes offensive had threatened to break through the Allied lines, and even though it failed, the British needed to reinforce their armies on the northwestern Europe front. They could not afford the public relations nightmare of continuing to fight EAM-ELAS, which, for most of the world, represented the Greek resistance. After protracted negotiations the British, the Greek government, and the KKE-EAM-ELAS formally ended the Battle of Athens with the conclusion of the Varkiza Agreement on 12 February 1945. The agreement, ultimately, achieved little in the long run, except to end the fighting in Athens. Both sides could claim victory—the British and the Greek government because they had actually won the battle and the KKE-EAM-ELAS because they had not lost the war, but merely one campaign.

The December Uprising left Athens in shambles with thousands of people homeless and a large number of its citizens permanently scarred and bitterly divided. During the thirty-three days of fighting, the once proud neighborhoods of Kolonaki, which had been synonymous with upper-class privilege, were squeezed from all

quarters by the fighting and reduced to a beleaguered enclave. In December 1944 the ELAS attacks pressing toward the center of Athens and the fashionable districts such as Kolonaki also symbolized the assault of the left against the political hegemony of the traditional political and economic establishment.

In 1944, however, the authority of this elite was in tatters. The ravages of the occupation, along with the chaos of liberation and civil war, had humbled and distorted the once affluent and influential Athenian families. The powerful groups and individuals who had reigned over Greece before the war, and whose imprint was stamped on all aspects of Greek political, economic, and cultural life, had been decimated by the occupation and rendered almost irrelevant by the resistance. During the crisis, the village peasants and the humble folk of the working-class districts fighting with ELAS were briefly the masters of Greece and Athens. Astonishingly, for the first time in the Greek political dynamic, the village ruled the city.

The survivors of the middle and upper classes clung to whatever represented the old political authority, whether this meant following the monarchy, the provisional government, the British, or even the ultra-right-wing paramilitary bands that had sprouted just prior to liberation. Still others sought another alternative by trying to leave the country, although there were few places in the world that were accessible, except for the very wealthy. Just about all of the Greek shipping magnates, for example, had escaped to London and New York. Young women, however, discovered that marriage to foreigners offered one of the few practical avenues of escape from the prospect of a grim economic future in war-torn Greece. To these women, British officers and even ordinary soldiers were a passport to a fresh start, especially since many wrongly assumed that any man from the United Kingdom was also wealthy and a member of the British aristocracy. Later, in the case of Americans, there was the equally mistaken notion that they were all fabulously rich. After liberation, during and after the December Uprising, just about every social occasion in Athens included its share of what Michael Ward, one of the few SOE officers in Athens at the time, called the "Kolonaki girls, almost all known to each other and encountered repeatedly at party after party ... gyrating on the floor with their British boyfriends. There was something exotic about going out with a foreigner and escaping in the mildest way the strict control exercised by many middle class parents, and to be frank, there was the chance of marriage to an Englezaki (Englishman)."

At first, dozens, then hundreds of these young, mostly middle-class, women managed to walk down the aisle with their trophy Englishmen and later were transported to Britain to begin their new lives. Dodis also recalls that language was not a barrier:

*In the spring after the Dekemvriana (December Uprising]*

*I went to work (after school) at a British Officers' Mess as an interpreter. Few people knew English then in Greece. At the canteen my main occupation turned out to be interpreting for couples who were planning to get married. The Greek girls didn't know any English and, of course, the British soldiers didn't know a word of Greek. Yet, they were intending to get married. The girls wanted to know where the men lived and how well off they were. The British soldiers presented a rosy picture. They told them a bunch of lies and that is why most of the girls returned within a year or two. The only girl I know who didn't return to Greece was my husband's sister. She braved it in Flixton, outside Manchester, in quite poor conditions until her family was able to send her financial help. She stayed married and still is with Frank.*

According to Ward, who also acquired a Greek bride, most of these unions did not survive more than "a year or two and the majority of these women decamped back to Greece."

Individually and collectively, the Greek war brides were symptomatic of the social distortions that buffeted Greek society in the postwar period. Perhaps they may be viewed as a metaphor for the relationship between the British and the Greek right. Eventually, and to some extent because of the December Uprising, the conservative element of Greek society, including that of Athens, was reconstituted and reinvigorated after 1945 as the "new right." By the end of 1944, the old monarchist-Venizelist schism had mutated beyond recognition, and its adherents melted into the forces of either the left or the right.

Prior to the occupation, the Venizelist-republican and the royalist factions had monopolized the Greek political scene. Although Greek liberalism and antimonarchism had become synonymous with the Venizelists, it did not necessarily mean that all the members of the Venizelos faction subscribed to liberal convictions and loathed the monarchy or that every royalist rejected liberal ideas. Rather, personal rivalry and competition for power often blurred their ideological differences, and on occasion, they easily shifted from one group to the other. The parties and factions of the left, on the other hand, were small and marginal in prewar Greek society. During the

period of the resistance, however, the roles were reversed, and the influence of the left overshadowed that of the traditional political parties.

At the same time, membership in the left or right did not necessarily emanate from defined constituencies of liberals, socialists, communists, royalists, or conservatives. In this context, it is difficult to determine the ideological proclivities of those who joined EAM as well as of those who fought for ELAS. Yet it is evident from the extant sources that many who followed EAM-ELAS did so out of patriotic and nationalist motives. The same can be said of those who supported the other resistance organizations. For example, ELAS and EDES included a large number of professional and monarchist officers, while approximately another thousand, many of them republicans, joined the notorious Security Battalions. After liberation, thousands of resistance fighters, regardless of their ideological proclivities, were labeled leftists simply because they had fought with ELAS or participated in EAM. Ironically, this stigma included the professional officers in ELAS, most of whom had been loyal to the crown, just as thousands of republicans decided that the monarchy was the best guarantee against communism and went over to the royalist camp. Hence, the fear of communism and professional opportunism converged in the emergence of the new right and contributed to the establishment of the anticommunist Greek state.

Furthermore, the unwillingness of the British, because of political considerations, to inflict total destruction on ELAS meant that the left could count on the support of a large body of men and women for support. Arguably a large number of ELAS and EAM followers accepted defeat and attempted to reintegrate into society—some did, but a great many could not avoid persecution by their political opponents. The failure of the succession of governments in the aftermath of the December Uprising to effect even a modicum of reconciliation and their inability to control the lawlessness of the right-wing gangs roaming the countryside practically paved the way for another confrontation. The next, and final, round of the civil war (1946-1949) was the most destructive and left deeper wounds and divisions in Greek society, which have lingered into the twenty-first century.

---

## ***From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage***

### **Poetry by Odysseus Elytis: TO ΑΙΩΝ ΕΣΤΙ**

#### ***Από τη ΓΕΝΕΣΗ***

ΑΛΛΑ ΠΙΠΙΝ ακούσω αγέρα ή μουσική  
που κινούσα σε ξάγναντο να βρώ  
(μιάν απέραντη κόκκινη άμμο ανέβαινα  
με τη φτέρνα μου σβήνοντας την Ιστορία)  
πάλευα τα σεντόνια. Ήταν αυτό που γύρευα  
και αθώο και ριγηλό σαν αμπελώνας  
και βαθύ και αχάραγο σαν η άλλη όψη τ' ουρανού

#### ***From THE GENESIS***

BUT BEFORE hearing the wind or music  
as I was setting out to find a vista  
(climbing a boundless red sand dune  
erasing History with my heel)  
I wrestled with my bed sheets. What I was looking for was  
innocent and tremulous like a vineyard  
deep and unscarred like the sky's other face

*Κάτι λίγο ψυχής μέσα σε άργιλλο*  
Τότε είπε και γεννήθηκεν η θάλασσα  
Και είδα και θαύμασα  
Και στη μέση της έσπειρε κόσμους μικρούς κατ' εικόνα  
και ομοίωσή μου:  
Ίπποι πέτρινοι με τη χαιτή ορθή  
και γαλήνιοι αμφορείς  
και λοξές δελφινιών ράχες  
η Ίος η Σίκινος η Σέριφος η Μήλος  
«Κάθε λέξη κι από 'να χελιδόνι  
γιά να σου φέρνει την άνοιξη μέσα στο θέρος» είπε  
«Και πολλά τα λιόδεντρα  
που να κρησάρουν στα χέρια τους το φως  
κι' ελαφρό ν' απλώνεται στον ύπνο σου  
και πολλά τα τζιτζίκια  
που να μην τα νιώθεις  
όπως δε νιώθεις το σφυγμό στο χέρι σου  
αλλά λίγο το νερό  
γιά να τό 'χεις Θεό και να κατέχεις τι σημαίνει  
ο λόγος του  
και το δέντρο μονάχο του  
χωρίς κοπάδι γιά να το κάνεις φίλο σου  
και να γνωρίζεις τ' ακριβό του τ' όνομα  
φτενό στα πόδια σου το χώμα  
γιά να μην έχεις πού ν' απλώσεις ρίζα  
και να τραβάς το βάθους ολοένα  
και πλατύς απάνου ο ουρανός  
γιά να διαβάζεις μόνος σου την απεραντοσύνη»  
ΑΥΤΟΣ  
ο κόσμος ο μικρός, ο μέγας!

### *Από ΤΑ ΠΑΘΗ*

ΤΗ ΓΛΩΣΣΑ μού έδωσαν ελληνική  
το σπίτι φτωχικό στις αμμουδιές του Ομήρου.  
Μονάχη έγνοια η γλώσσα μου στις αμμουδιές του  
Ομήρου.  
Εκεί ρόδια, κυδώνια  
θεοί μελαχρινοί, θείοι κι εξαδέλφοι  
το λάδι αδειάζοντας μες στα πελώρια κιούπια  
και πνοές από τη ρεματιά ευωδιάζοντας  
λυγαριά και σχίνο  
σπάρτα και πιπερόριζα  
με τα πρώτα πιπίσματα των σπίνων  
ψαλμωδιές γλυκές με τα πρώτα Δόξα Σοι.  
Μονάχη έγνοια η γλώσσα μου, με τα πρώτα Δόξα Σοι!  
Εκεί δάφνες και βάγια  
θυμιατό και λιβάνισμα  
τις πάλες ευλογώντας και τα καριοφίλια.  
Στο χώμα το στρωμένο με τ' αμπελομάντιλα  
κνίσεις, τσουγκρίσματα  
και Χριστός Ανέστη  
με τα πρώτα συμπάρα των Ελλήνων.  
Αγάπες μυστικές με τα πρώτα λόγια του Ύμνου.  
Μονάχη έγνοια η γλώσσα μου, με τα πρώτα λόγια του  
Ύμνου!

*A drop of soul amidst the clay*  
Then he spoke and the sea was born  
And I gazed upon it and marveled  
In its center he sowed little worlds in my image  
and likeness:  
Horses of stone with manes erect  
and tranquil amphorae  
and slanting backs of dolphins  
Ios, Sikinos, Serifos, Milos  
"Each word a swallow  
to bring you spring in the midst of summer," he said  
And ample the olive trees  
to sift the light through their fingers  
that it may spread gently over your sleep  
and ample the cicadas  
which you will feel no more  
than you feel the pulse inside your wrist  
but scarce the water  
so that you hold it a God and understand the meaning  
of its voice  
and the tree alone  
no flock beneath it so that you take it for a friend  
and know its precious name  
sparse the earth beneath your feet  
so that you have no room to spread your roots  
and keep reaching down in depth  
and broad the sky above  
so that you read the infinite on your own  
THIS WORLD  
this small world the great!

### *From THE PASSION*

GREEK the language they gave me;  
poor the house on Homer's shores.  
My only care my language on Homer's shores.  
There pomegranates, quinces,  
swarthy gods, uncles and cousins  
emptying oil into giant jars;  
and breaths from the ravine fragrant  
with osier and terebinth  
broom and ginger root  
with the first chirping of finches,  
sweet psalms with the very first Glory Be to Thee.  
My only care my language with the very first Glory Be to  
Thee!  
There laurel and palm leaves  
censer and incense  
blessing the swords and muskets.  
On soil spread with vine-scarves,  
the smell of roasting lamb, Easter eggs cracking,  
and "Christ is Risen,"  
with the first salvos of the Greeks.  
Secret loves with the first words of the Hymn.  
My only care my language with the first words of the  
Hymn!