



HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

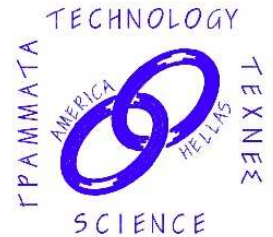
A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

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Upcoming Events

The Life, Times, Films and Influence of Melina Mercouri

On Sunday, October 17, 2010, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents *Dr. Andrew Horton*, professor of Film and Video Studies at the University of Oklahoma, in a lecture titled “*I Was Born Greek!: The Life, Times, Films and Influence of Melina Mercouri (1920-1994)*”. The event will take place at 3 pm at the Four Points by 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.

Dr. Horton has lived and worked in Greece for over eight years since the time of the Junta in the 1960’s and knew Melina and her filmmaking husband Jules Dassin personally for years. He wishes to share the power Melina had as a person, as an actress, as a Greek activist against the Junta, and finally as the Minister of Culture in the latter part of her life helping all parts of Greece to grow culturally in theater, film, and the other arts. He will also share the project he is completing for a feature screenplay about Melina’s life.

Clips will be shown from several of her famous films including *Stella* (1955), *Never on Sunday* (1960), *Topkapi* (1964) and *A Dream Of Passion* (1978).

Finally, perhaps we can all agree, Greece today needs another Melina or someone like her to help “make a difference in hard times!”

Andrew Horton is the Jeanne H. Smith Professor of Film and Video Studies at the University of Oklahoma, an award winning screenwriter, and the author of twenty three books on film, screenwriting and cultural studies including: “*The Films of Theo Angelopoulos*”, “*Screenwriting For A Global Market*”, “*Henry Bumstead and the World of Hollywood Art Direction*”, “*Writing The Character Centered Screenplay*”, and “*Laughing Out Loud: Writing The Comedy Centered Screenplay*”.

His films include Brad Pitt’s first feature film, *The Dark Side of the Sun* and the much awarded *Something In Between* (1983, Yugoslavia, directed by Srdjan Karanovic). He has given screenwriting workshops around the world including Norway, Germany, England, the Czech Republic, Greece, New Zealand, Switzerland and throughout the United States.

His current scripts in development include one about Melina Mercouri, *I Was Born Greek* and a New Zealand

New Orleans jazz sheep farm comedy, *Make a Joyful Noise*.

Greek Elysium and Egyptian Ideas at about 663 BC

On Sunday, November 21, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Professor *Nanno Marinatos* from the Department of Classics and Mediterranean Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, in a lecture titled “*Greek Elysium and Egyptian Ideas at about 663 BC*”. The event will take place at 3 pm at the Four Points by 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.

In the *Odyssey* and the poems of Hesiod we hear about a lovely place known as the *Elysian Fields* or the *Isles of the Blessed*. Where are these places? An attempt will be made first to locate them on a map and second to show this map including the beyond (the other world). The idea of the beyond and its special properties arrived from Egypt where we find many of the same motifs as in the Homeric poems. Egyptian ideas on the afterlife will be examined and compared with those of the Greeks.

The lecture will then address the historical circumstances under which the transmission took place and a case will be made that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* originate in the 7th century BCE, around 663 BCE. The historical context is given by the expansion of the Assyrian empire and the Greek-Egyptian resistance to this expansionism.

Nanno Marinatos completed her degree in Classics at the University of Colorado with a doctoral thesis on *Thucydides and Religion* and taught for a year at Oberlin College as an assistant professor (1979-1980). She then returned to Greece where she took up her father’s work on Minoan Crete specializing on Minoan religion, a field in which she is of world renown. Since 2001 she is a full professor teaching ancient Greek at the department of Classics at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

She has four books on Minoan Crete and one on Greek religion all dealing with the relationship between culture and religion: *Minoan Religion*, *Minoan Sacrificial Ritual*, *Art and Religion in Thera*, and *The Goddess and the Warrior*. Her latest book, *Minoan Kingship and the Solar Goddess*, was just published by the University of Illinois Press. She has also published about 100 papers in international journals dealing with Archaic Greece and Minoan Crete. Her latest interest is the relationship of Homer to Egyptian traditions.

In Brief

New HLM Board of Directors

Effective June 1st, the composition of the HLM Board of Directors is as follows: Vangelis Economou, president; Andreas Melas, vice president and recording secretary; George Alexopoulos, treasurer; Stefanos Sakellarides, corresponding secretary; Petros Antonopoulos, board member; and Constantine Tzanos, board member.

HLM Scholarships

A number of scholarships, \$1,500 or more each, will be awarded to university or college students of Greek descent that are residents of a Midwestern State. Copies of the application, with complete details on deadlines, eligibility, and selection criteria can be obtained at:

<http://www.helleniclinkmidwest.org/HLMW-scholarship.html>

The Management of Greek Public Companies

According to the NY Times (July 21, 2010), in 2009, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley advised the Greek government to overhaul its money-losing railway system. It was recommended to lay-off half of the system's 7,000 workers and have the government take on roughly half of the company's 8 billion euros in debt. The suggestion did not fly. Losses at *Hellenic Railways (OSE)*, continue to mount — at the rate of 3 million euros a day. Its total debt has increased to \$13 billion, or about 5 percent of Greece's gross domestic product.

The International Monetary Fund and the European Union, are requiring that the debt of Hellenic Railways, as well as the off-balance-sheet obligations of other state-owned enterprises, be counted toward Greece's official debt — which Greece has agreed to do. Analysts estimate the total to be around \$33.6 billion, a sum that would add another 11 percentage points to Greece's current debt level of about 120 percent of gross domestic product. Some have argued that Hellenic Railways should shut down the majority of its routes, especially in the mountainous Peloponnese region where trains, manned by drivers being paid as much as \$130,000 a year, frequently run empty.

The Greek government has provided sovereign backing to Hellenic Railways, thus allowing it to borrow billions from accommodating foreigners even though the company's finances are so skewed that it pays three times as much on interest expenses than it collects in revenue. Until now, Greece has been able to use its rail system as a means to support employment while not adding to its official debt. "This was an accounting trick, another good way for the government to hide its debt," said John C. Mourmouris, a former chief executive of the railway who is now an economics professor. "But a company with 100 million euros in revenue can no longer borrow 1 billion euros a year." In the latest annual figures available, Hellenic Railways reported a

loss of more than \$1 billion in 2008, on sales of about \$253 million. The average salary of a rail employee is more than \$78,000. Employees benefited from politically inspired pay increases over the last decade. Between 2000 and 2009, the cost of the company's payroll soared by 50 percent even as overall personnel decreased by 30 percent. According to Mr. Mourmouris, for Hellenic Railways to just break even, it would need to increase passenger traffic by a factor of 10, an outcome that seems unlikely.

According to the Greek newspaper Kathimerini (August 7, 2010), in 2009, the various companies overseen by the Athens Urban Transport Organization (OASA), including the buses, metro and electric railway, spent 800 million euros on wages but their combined inflows were no more than 350 million euros. Between 2006 and 2009, OASA's losses increased from 2.2 billion to 3.6 billion. During the same period, the average salaries of public transport workers increased by 22 percent. The firm that runs the tram, which started operating in 2004, spends 30 million euros a year to pay its staff but only makes 5 million euros from selling tickets. The wages of some employees at public companies are inflated by overtime, bonuses for their participation on committees, extraordinary payments and supplementary pay. At OSE, for instance, the average wage not including the added extras is just over 32,000 euros but once all the fringe benefits have been added, it goes up to more than 52,000 euros. An example of how these benefits are applied is that metro train drivers work eight hours a day but four of those hours are treated as overtime, meaning that their average monthly wage is more than 6,000 euros.

National Priorities and Political Sensitivity

The Greek government, with the concurrence of the opposition parties, has approved their annual state funding to be increased from 37.1 million euros to 48.8 million, a 32% increase, while the country is on the verge of bankruptcy (Kathimerini, July 17, 2010).

From Our History

The Reasons for the Civil War

From the book "Blood and Tears, Greece 1940-1949" by George C. Papavizas

Assuming that the nature of the conflict is now settled, several fundamental questions still remain: What were the basic reasons underlying the conflict? And, more importantly, what were the responsibilities of the Left and Right in triggering the confrontation that caused the nation so much blood and tears?

From a global perspective, the civil war's origins can be traced to the conflicting foreign interests in Greece during World War II and the ensuing Cold War realities among the allies. For a long time the British, and later the Americans, had used Greece's geopolitical and strategic position as a bridgehead to advance their own Balkan and Mediterranean interests. The Soviets used Greece as a hot

spot at the beginning of the Cold War and exploited the KKE (Communist Party of Greece) as a war instrument to force the British and the Americans out of the Balkans and eventually the Eastern Mediterranean. It is in this context that the hot conflict in Greece must be considered, which leads to the question: Would civil war have flared up in Greece if the allies had not been embroiled in a cold war?

Stalin had accepted Churchill's suggestion of a 90 percent British influence in Greece after the war, but he never really abandoned his plan to propel Greece into his orbit and fulfill the age-old Russian-Soviet dream of controlling the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. The only thing that held Stalin back from ordering the KKE to engage in armed conflict immediately after Varkiza was his agreement with Churchill and the fear of Great Britain's and America's intervention. After Churchill's famous address at Fulton, Missouri, however, in which he declared that "*An iron curtain has descended across the Continent*" (5 March 1946), Stalin no longer felt obliged to abide by the 1944 percentages agreement. It is remarkable that Churchill's "*Iron Curtain*" address preceded Zachariadis's meeting with Stalin in Moscow and Crimea (April 1946) by a little over a month. At that meeting, Stalin approved the KKE decision to escalate the war.

As long as it was not obvious he was the agitator, it was in Stalin's interest to embroil Greece in a civil war that would distract his former allies and exhaust their resources. Many observers agreed that Stalin instigated the conflict or at least tacitly approved it. They speak of three possible scenarios: (a) that Zachariadis suggested in a memo to Stalin that the conflict be started, which Stalin approved at their Crimea meeting; (b) that Stalin urged Zachariadis to begin the conflict; and (c) that Stalin ordered Zachariadis to begin the Third Round for reasons of the Soviet Union's foreign policy.

The writings and pronouncements of high-echelon KKE leaders published after the 1949 defeat support the notion that blatant foreign interference explains the civil war in Greece. Dimitri Vlantas (Democratic Army of Greece ((DAG) Major-General), for instance, who remained faithful to Zachariadis to the end and spent at least thirty years in the Soviet Union after DAG's defeat, wrote in his book *Betrayed Revolution*: "The leadership of the Soviet KK (Communist Party) encouraged the KKE leadership to intensify the war to promote Russian self interests." Also, Zachariadis said to Achileas Papaioannou in Sorgout, Siberia, before his death: "The responsibility for the beginning and the end of the civil war is not exclusively ours," implying that someone else was also responsible. He also wrote in 1968: "For the success of our popular movement we were forced to take the guns in our hands again. This decision was approved by our brothers in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, who promised wholeheartedly a great support."

Polarization between the Left and Right, which gradually sharpened in occupied Greece during the resistance years and was underlined by political and economic woes, was

another serious reason for the civil war. The lack of harmony during those years was the catalyst for the final, bloody cleavage.

The extreme mistrust between EAM/ELAS (which controlled most of Greece in 1944) and the Greek government did not vanish with the German departure or the signing of the Varkiza Agreement after the *Dekemvriana*. The political and social gap between the two extremes was very deep and became deeper with time. It was fed by the loathing that had emerged in the previous two rounds and by the flourishing *Andartiko* (resistance), which created conditions for a deep chasm in society. The idea of going to the mountains and challenging government authorities with arms connoted intent to overthrow the existing political and economic order. A section of the Greek population felt that such a threat to the *status quo* undermined the country's bourgeois orientation. In contrast, the men in the mountains felt that people supporting the government were monarcho-fascists and enemies of the people.

Liberation sharpened the differences and rallied the opposing camps. Much had changed between the German occupation and the country's liberation. Greece was hopelessly and tangibly divided into two sections without borders: the occupied country which received economic help from international agencies (Red Cross, Sweden, etc.) and Free Greece, the rural areas that depended on their own meager resources for survival. The Free Greece of the resistance had been cut off from the international community. Its ideological and social bases were not enough to sustain its continuity. The economic hardship created prerequisites for civil war. The extremism of the Right fostered the extremism of the Left and *vice versa*. The national government after the Varkiza agreement continued its attempts to consolidate the pre-war political and economic system in a country that the Left had methodically prepared for collectivization and Marxism. Varkiza was no more than an ill-conceived armistice agreement signed as the civil war was actually at its genesis.

The KKE's decision to sign the Varkiza Agreement reflected a broader Communist plan to step backward under pressure but continue the struggle by all means. Zachariadis confessed in his memorandum to Stalin of 13 May 1947 that "In reality Varkiza was only a pause. The KKE, signing the agreement made a step backward to gain time." He reaffirmed this view at the Sixth Plenum of the KKE's Central Committee (9 October 1949): "After the defeat in December 1944, Varkiza was a necessary maneuver to reorganize the people's democratic forces."

In these circumstances - the dark clouds of the Cold War, unbridgeable dichotomies between the extreme Left and Right, and the KKE's plans for a future struggle set in motion before the ink on the Varkiza Agreement was dry - we may then ask: What triggered the three-year conflict, and what were the responsibilities of the Left and Right? (*to be continued*)

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry by Constantinos Kavafy

En Μεγάλη Ελληνική Αποικία, 200 π. Χ.

‘Οτι τα πράγματα δεν βαίνουν κατ’ ευχήν στην Αποικία
δεν μὲν’ ἡ ελαχίστη αμφιβολία
και μ’ ὄλο που οπωσούν τραβούμ’ εμπρός,
ίσως, καθὼς νομίζουν οὐκ ολίγοι, να ἐφθασε ο καιρός
να φέρουμε Πολιτικό Αναμορφωτή.

Ὅμως το πρόσκομμα κ’ ἡ δυσκολία
εἶναι που κάμνουνε μια ιστορία
μεγάλη κάθε πράγμα οἱ Αναμορφωταί
αυτοί (Ευτύχημα θα ἦταν αν ποτέ
δεν τους χρειάζονταν κανεῖς). Γιὰ κάθε τι,
γιά το παραμικρό ρωτοῦνε κ’ ἐξετάζουν,
κ’ ευθύς στον νου τους ριζικές μεταρρυθμίσεις βάζουν,
με την απαίτηση να εκτελεσθῶν ἄνευ αναβολῆς.

Ἐχουνε και μία κλίση στὲς θυσίες
Παραιτηθεῖτε ἀπὸ τὴν κτήσιν σας ἐκεῖνη
ἡ κατοχὴ σας εἶναι ἐπιφαλῆς:
ἢ τέτοιες κτήσεις ακριβῶς βλάπτουν τὲς Αποικίες.
Παραιτηθεῖτε ἀπὸ τὴν πρόσοδον αὐτή,
και ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλληνα τὴν συναφή,
κι ἀπὸ τὴν τρίτη τούτην; ὡς συνέπεια φυσική
εἶναι μὲν οὐσιώδεις, ἀλλὰ τι να γίνει;
σας δημιουργοῦν μιὰ ἐπιβλαβὴ ευθύνη

Κι ὅσο στον ἔλεγχό τους προχωροῦνε,
βρίσκουν και βρίσκουν περιττά, και να πενθοῦν ζητοῦνε:
πράγματα που ὅμως δύσκολα τα καταργεῖ κανεῖς.

Κι ὅταν με το καλό, τελειώσουνε τὴν εργασία,
κι ὀρίσαντες και περικόψαντες το παν λεπτομερῶς,
ἀπέλθουν, παίρνοντας και τὴν δικαία μισθοδοσία,
να δούμε τι ἀπομένει πια, μετὰ
τόση δεινότητα χειρουργική.

Ἴσως δεν ἐφθασεν ἀκόμη ο καιρός
Να μη βιαζόμεθα εἶν’ επικίνδυνον πράγμα ἡ βία.
Τα πρόωρα μέτρα φέρνουν μεταμέλεια.
Ἐχει ἄτοπα πολλὰ, βεβαίως και δυστυχῶς, ἡ Αποικία.
Ὅμως ὑπάρχει τι το ἀνθρώπινον χωρὶς ἀτέλεια;
Και τέλος πάντων, νά, τραβούμ’ εμπρός.

On A Large Greek Colony, 200 B. C.

That things in the Colony are not what they should be
no one can doubt any longer,
and though in spite of everything we do go forward,
maybe—as more than a few believe—the time has come
to bring in a Political Reformer.

But here's the problem, here's the hitch:
they make a tremendous fuss
about everything, these Reformers.
(What a relief it would be
if no one ever needed them.) They probe everywhere,
question the smallest detail,
and right away think up radical changes
that demand immediate execution.

Also, they have a liking for sacrifice:
Get rid of that property;
your owning it is risky:
properties like those are exactly what ruin colonies.
Get rid of that income,
and the other connected with it,
and this third, as a natural consequence:
they are substantial, but what can one do?
the responsibility they create for you is damaging.

And as they proceed with their investigation,
they find an endless number of useless things to eliminate
things that are, however, difficult to get rid of.

And when, all being well, they finish the job,
every detail now diagnosed and sliced away,
and they retire, also taking the wages due to them
it will be a miracle if anything's left at all
after such surgical efficiency.

Maybe the moment has not yet arrived.
Let's not be too hasty: haste is a dangerous thing.
Untimely measures bring repentance.
Certainly, and unhappily, many things in the Colony are
absurd.

But is there anything human without some fault?
And after all, you see, we do go forward.