



HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

The First Victory, Greece in the Second World War

On Sunday, October 28, 2012, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents George Blytas, PhD., in a lecture titled “*The First Victory, Greece in the Second World War*”. 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.

In WWII, the Greeks, representing one percent of the final Allied population, kept the Axis powers in battle for seven months that is for ten percent of the duration of that war. Hitler himself has attributed his defeat exclusively to the Greek resistance. However, during the last sixty four years, the critical role that Greece has played in the Second World War has been generally ignored, belittled and even falsified by English speaking historians. In his work, *The First Victory, Greece in the Second World War, a Complete Military and Diplomatic History of WWII Greece*, Dr. Blytas shows how the surprisingly long and totally unexpected Greek resistance to the invading armies of Italy and Germany was pivotal to the outcome of WWII at the Russian front, the Mediterranean, in North Africa and in the Middle East.

The Greek victories in Albania provided badly needed relief to the British, who until then were fighting the Axis alone. The archives of the warring armies, personal accounts of participants, and personal documents of leaders on both sides, provide the backdrop of the ferocious battles of the Greek forces against numerically superior and better equipped forces. The resistance which emerged in occupied Greece forced Hitler to disperse his forces in a manner that resulted in his eventual defeat. However, that resistance came at a staggering cost to the Greek nation, and has left its imprint to the Greek society to this day.

The loss of life experienced by Greece is comparable to that experienced by the United States and the United Kingdom combined; and the material damages to Greece are roughly equivalent to thirty three pre-war gross domestic products.

Dr. Blytas will present a broad outline of how the Greek Nation contributed to the Allied Victory in the Second World War.

George Blytas grew up in Cairo, Egypt, where he graduated from the Greek Gymnasium while the Civil War was raging in Greece. He first pursued a career in music, and was instrumental in establishing a branch of the National Conservatory of Greece in Cairo. Political events in Egypt prompted a change in his career. He received his doctorate in Physical Chemistry and Chemical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin, and 1961 joined the research division of a major oil company for a distinguished 39-year career in California, the Netherlands and Houston. Throughout those years Dr. Blytas has been active in Hellenic affairs and in music.

Women in the ancient world, Athens and Rome

On Sunday, November 18, 2012, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents professor Antony Avgoustakis, in a lecture titled “*Women in the Ancient World, Athens and Rome*”. The event will take place at 3 pm at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park. Admission is free for HLM members and \$5 for non-members.

This presentation will offer an overview of the role of women in the ancient world, in Athens and Rome, but also in Greece and Italy in general. Classical texts provide ample information concerning the status of women from the earliest of times, from Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey through Periclean Athens to the Hellenistic times and Alexander’s expansion to the East, as well as the imperial times through the spread of Christianity and the eventual transformation of the empire into Byzantium. Women in the Greek and Roman household enjoyed few liberties at first, but acquired a lot of power as the centuries progressed. For example, women played important roles as mothers in Athens in the fifth century BC, as well as wives of prominent politicians. The transformation of the role of women is more evident in Rome, where female figures became very prominent and eventually played an important role in political decisions under the emperors. Above all, women are commemorated in Greek and Latin literature as mothers, wives, and educators of their children, as we can also see

from epigraphic evidence and the material culture of the periods (especially tomb stones).

Antony Augoustakis is associate professor of Classics, Medieval Studies, Comparative and World Literature, and Translation Studies at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, USA). He holds a BA in Greek Philology from the University of Crete and a PhD in Classics from Brown University. Before coming to Illinois, he held an associate professorship in Classics at Baylor University in Texas. He is the author and editor of five books and numerous articles in the area of Greek and Latin literature, especially the role of motherhood in the ancient world: *Motherhood and the Other: Fashioning Female Power in Flavian Epic* (Oxford, 2010), *Plautus' Mercator* (Bryn Mawr, 2009), *Brill Companion to Silius Italicus* (Leiden, 2010), *Ritual and Religion in Flavian Epic* (Oxford, 2013), *Statius' Silvae and the Poetics of Intimacy* (Johns Hopkins, 2007). He is the editor of the academic journal *Illinois Classical Studies* and secretary-treasurer of the national society *Women's Classical Caucus*.

In Brief

EU Can-Kicking Is Undermining Greece

Source: CNBC, Sept 18, 2012

Over the last few weeks European leaders have paused on their persistent criticism of Greece, now recognizing it belongs to the Euro family since there is a new, determined leadership in place.

They say they can do business with the new government, but such words are cheap since every so often they push back the goal posts and the dates of coming through on their tangible promises. Inaction and longer delays will only mean higher costs in the end.

Greece remains in a five year recessionary free-fall made worse by the toxic austerity conditions imposed by the troika - the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Previous administrative resistance to reforms and two electoral cycles this year have brought public finances to their knees, much like in 2010 when Athens turned to the international community for help after being frozen out of borrowing markets.

Recently Prime Minister Antonis Samaras kicked into a gear an impressive privatization policy for the sale of real estate assets and public enterprises. These include family silver like holdings in betting monopoly OPAP, undervalued electricity and water utilities, large tracts of prime land for development, and even long term leases of uninhabited islands and islets.

However, EU political leaders themselves knew for the

last year that they were torpedoing the sale and reform efforts by casting doubt on the debt-laden Mediterranean country's place in the euro common currency. The looming fear of a return to a heavily devalued drachma has eased recently, but troika can-kicking is again depressing interest and prices.

On top of that, EU lenders are militant in their case, while most of their policies have failed everywhere and have piled on misery across the European periphery. The three-month old tripartite coalition government has been thrown in the deep-end, working overtime to hammer out an 11.5 billion euro package of more cuts and taxes on a weary public at its wits end.

The hypocrisy is palpable because Greece has been waiting for many months for the long promised 31.5 billion euro bailout tranche. And even though the government is getting its act together, it may take two more squandered months of delays before a single euro is disbursed.

Because of the needless delays, the Mediterranean country can't recapitalize its banks and more businesses will hit the wall for lack of liquidity, causing avoidable economic contraction. The EU response continues to lack determination and speed, making it essentially harder for Greece to succeed because of the perpetuated debt-trap. An endless recessionary spiral means fewer taxes can be collected, delaying the achievement of a primary surplus and thereby worsening the nation's debt sustainability profile.

The troika and Greece's euro zone partners seem unwilling to publicly recognize the plainly obvious - that the Greek program is derailed and has been derailed for two years. That isn't only because of Greek inaction on structural reforms and privatizations, but also because the austerity mix was toxic in potency from the beginning. Note that Portugal, which moved swiftly on supply side reforms, is also off track because, as obvious to the non-ideological, the policy recipe was wrong to begin with.

What every sensible expert knows is that Greece cannot meet the 120 percent debt to GDP target by the end of 2014. In fact, it is likely to come in anywhere between 140 to 160 percent. A two year extension of the program will also cost an additional 20 billion to 40 billion euros, not just because of the extra 24 months of financing, but also because the depth of the recessionary spiral has persistently been underestimated.

There are three fairly simple solutions that are cash neutral for Europe and the troika, which would also be valuable in assisting a Greek economic rebound. They can buy extra time by deferring 21 billion euros of IMF loans until 2016. The ECB and national central banks

can forego 13 billion euros in profit on Greek government bonds without taking any loss. And the ESM/EFSF bailout mechanisms can recapitalize Greek banks directly, like the Spanish model, and this will cut Greek debt to GDP in one stroke by about 15 percent. These solutions don't need a genius and there are no good reasons they should be postponed for more months.

Whether it is negligent dithering and posturing, purposive delays for more leverage to impose more dead-end hash austerity on a lab rat, or supercharging internal deflation so foreign buyers can snap up cheaper assets, if one scratches the surface of modern European solidarity for Greece there are some worrying parallels to the medieval sin of usury.

From Our History

World War II Atrocities in Greece

This note is a summary of the loss of human life and wealth in occupied Greece during the course of WWII as a direct result of actions taken by the occupying forces, primarily the German forces. Bibliography will be provided at the end of the summary.

The material cost of the war to Greece, includes the total loss of infrastructure and industry, the collapse of the economy in general, and the looting of treasure, both national and private. It has been estimated that the total material cost to Greece amounts to several gross domestic annual products.

During the Battle for Greece almost 20,000 enlisted Greek men were killed, and more than a 100,000 were wounded or frostbitten, one fifth of them ending up as amputees. About 4,000 civilians were killed in air raids, which also destroyed hundreds of buildings, including churches, hospitals and schools. But those numbers pale by comparison to the loss of human life experienced during the occupation. According to conservative estimates, the deaths resulting directly from the war before the war ended, adds up to about 578,000. That number comprises the deaths resulting from the persistent famine caused by the economic policies of the Axis, and the violent deaths resulting from the resistance and the reprisals; but it does not include the deaths resulting from diseases such as TB and malaria, persistent malnutrition, wounds and exposure, which were a direct result of war conditions, but occurred shortly after the end of the war. Doxiadis estimates the overall loss of life due to the war to be 13% of the Greek population.

Two executive orders issued at the highest levels of the Third Reich played an important role in the Greek Holocaust. The first, issued by Hitler himself, was the torching directive according to which, if there was a suspicion that a residence was used by the resistance, that building was a legitimate target to be burned, regardless of the possibility that the majority of the inhabitants might be non-combatants. The second order, signed by Marshal Wilhelm Keitel on 16 September 1941, specified that for every German killed, at a minimum 100 hostages should be executed, and for every wounded German, 50 Greeks should die.

The first mass executions took place in Crete even before the island fell to the Germans. In 1945, under the auspices of the United Nations, a four-member committee headed by Nikos Kazantzakis was given the task to investigate Axis atrocities in Crete. The Kazantzakis report enumerates the destruction of more than 106 Cretan villages and many massacres.

The first mass murder was recorded in the village Galatas, near Hania, where the villagers had dared to defend their birthplace from the invading Germans. On 26 May 1941, while the battle was still raging, the Germans murdered old men and women in their homes, and looted and burned the village. One of the massacres the Kazantzakis committee did not report was the murder of all men in Kontomari. That massacre was immortalized for posterity by Peter Weixler, a German officer whose photographs graphically describe the execution.

An even worse fate befell the village Kandanos, whose men and women had fought the Germans in order to allow hundreds of Allied troops to escape the paratroopers by reaching safely the south shore of Crete. In Kandanos, all men and women were murdered. Among those executed was Kostas Archakis, aged 103 and two eighty-year old women who were thrown into their burning homes to endure horrible deaths. Several mass graves were found around the Agias Prison in the Hania area.

These massacres were only the beginning. On 20 October 1941, in Ano and Kato Kerdyllia in Macedonia, the Germans gathered 222 men, ages 15 to 60, ordered them to excavate a mass tomb, executed them under the gaze of their families, and then burned the villages. On October 24, in Mesovouno of Ptolemais, the Germans executed 165 men and then burned the village. On October 25, in the area of Kilkis, they executed 96 men and then burned the villages Kleisto, Kydonia and Ampelofyto. Those massacres were carried out solely to intimidate the people of Greece.

(To be continued)

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry by Nikephoros Vrettakos

Nikephoros Vrettakos (1912–1991) was born in the village of Krokees, near Sparta but originated from Mani. He published his first collection of poems, *Under Shadows and Lights*, in 1929, at the age of seventeen. In 1937 he began a thirty year career in the Greek Civil Service, also seeing combat service in the Greco-Italian war during the Second World War. He won a number of prizes and medals, including the Greek State Poetry Prize twice. Some of his poems became popular songs in musical settings by Greek composers, including Mikis Theodorakis. His verse was also translated into many languages. He was also elected as a member of the Academy of Athens in 1987.

ΤΟ ΑΝΟΙΓΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΡΤΑΣ

...Λοιπόν , το στερέωμα είναι αγάπη.
Ποτέ δε θα πέσει..."
Γυρνώ τραγουδώντας.
Στα πόδια μου σκόνη απ' όλα τα έθνη. Απ' όλους
τους πόνους.
Στην κόμη μου στάχτη. Μισανοίγω την πόρτα.
Στο βάθος, το τζάκι. Και δίπλα η μητέρα μου.
Τινάζεται όρθια, ξαφνιάζεται, τρέχει.
Διπλώνω τα χέρια μου γύρω στους ώμους της.
Ρίχνω το μέτωπο πάνω στο στήθος της.
"...Δος μου μια τούφα χλόης...
να κοιμηθώ..."
Δος μου τ' άγιο σου χέρι ,
να γράψω ένα ποίημα. Όχι με λέξεις.
Όχι πια λέξεις! Μ' ένα μου φίλημα.
Πάρε τώρα τα κουρασμένα μου δάκτυλα,
κρέμασέ τα στον τοίχο να στεγνώσουνε. Κοίταξε.
Στάζουν έρημο, αγέρα, λύπη και θάλασσα.

Ο ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ, Ο ΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ Η ΠΟΙΗΣΗ

Ανάσκαψα όλη τη γη να σε βρω.
Κοσκίνισα μες την καρδιά μου την έρημο, ήξερα
πως δίχως τον άνθρωπο δεν είναι πλήρες
του ήλιου το φως. Ενώ, τώρα, κοιτάζοντας
μέσ από τόση διαύγεια τον κόσμο,
μες από σένα – πλησιάζουν τα πράγματα,
γίνονται ευδιάκριτα, γίνονται διάφανα -
τώρα μπορώ
ν' αρθρώσω την τάξη του σ' ένα μου ποίημα.
Παίρνοντας μια σελίδα θα βάλω
σ' ευθείες το φως.

ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΣ ΜΕ ΤΗΝ ΠΟΙΗΣΗ

Έρθες ποίηση πάλι. Θ' ανακάλυψες φαίνεται
κάποιο μου κόκκαλο που δεν έχει λιώσει.
Μια πτυχή της καρδιάς μου που δεν έγινε κύμα σου.
Μιάν ανέπαφη φλέβα σε κάποιο μου δάχτυλο.
Έναν ιστό που δεν έγινε στίχος σου.
Θα το ξέρουνε αύριο: Κοιτώντας τον κόσμο
με μοίρασες δίκαια. Μ' έκαμες χίλιες
σπίθες και μια – και με σκόρπισες.

THE DOOR'S OPENING

..Therefore, the firmament is love.
It will never crumble ..."
I return singing
On my feet there is dust from all nations. From all the
suffering.
Dust on my hair. I half-open the door.
The fireplace is in the distance. Next to it is my mother.
She snaps up, startled, and runs.
I wrap my hands on her shoulders.
I press my forehead against her breast.
"... Give me a tuft of grass...
so that I may sleep"
Give me your blessed hand
so that I may write a poem. Not with words.
No more words! With a kiss.
Take my ten tired fingers now,
hang them on the wall to dry. Look.
They drip solitude, wind, pity, and sea

MAN, THE WORLD, AND POETRY

I dug up all the world to find you.
I sifted the desert in my heart; I knew
that without man the sun's light
is not fulfilled. While now, gazing
at the world through such clarity,
through you — things focus,
become distinguishable, transparent —
now I can
express its order in one of my poems.
Taking a page I will set
light in straight lines.

DIALOGUE WITH POETRY

You've come again, Poetry. You must have
discovered some bone of mine that has not dissolved.
A fold of my heart that has not become your undulation.
An untouched vein in one of my fingers.
A tissue that has not become a verse of yours.
They will know of it tomorrow; viewing the world,
you divided me justly. You made me a thousand
and one sparks — and scattered me.