



HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

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Upcoming Events

Bulkes: The 'Greek Republic' in Yugoslavia

On Sunday, December 18, 2016, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Alexander Billinis in a lecture titled: *"Bulkes: The 'Greek Republic' in Yugoslavia."* The event will take place at 3:00 pm at the Niles Public Library, 6960 W Oakton St, Niles, IL. Admission will be free.

From 1945 to 1949, Greek Communists created an autonomous community in an empty ex-German village in northern Yugoslavia. The Bulkes community was the scene of terror and communal strife, in the midst of a tragic civil war. It was, however, remarkable in that it was a completely self-governing unit in Yugoslavia, with the Greek language, Greek laws, and their own currency. It functioned as a base camp, training and indoctrination center, as well as an effort to establish a functioning Greek Communist society.

Alexander Billinis, a former resident of Serbia, will talk about his efforts, through site visits and interviews, to understand what happened in this remarkable yet ultimately doomed community, and why the subject is viewed with hostility and silence by Official Serbia.

Alexander Billinis graduated from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in 1991, where he majored in Western and Eastern European Studies. He earned a master's degree from the American Graduate School of International Management in 1994 and a law degree from American University Washington College of Law in 1997. His career has spanned banking, real estate, law and journalism. He has lived in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the UK. He is the author of *"The Eagle has Two Faces: Journeys through Byzantine Europe"* and *"Hidden Mosaics: An Aegean Tale."* He has written extensively on the Greek Diaspora in Eastern Europe, including the Civil War era refugees. A dual citizen of the US and Greece, he was born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1969.

Annual Dinner Dance -- Scholarship Awards

The *Annual Dinner Dance, New Year Celebration, and Scholarship Awards* of Hellenic Link–Midwest will be held on Saturday, January 21, 2017, at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Road at Schiller Park, starting at 6:30 pm. The proceeds from the Annual Dinner Dance are used to support the scholarships,

cultural and educational programs, and all other activities of our organization. The generous support of our members and friends will be greatly appreciated. For tickets, at \$80 per person (\$25 for children up to 12 years old), please call 847-612-2202, or contact any of the Board members. Tickets can also be purchased at the door the night of the event, but purchase of tickets in advance will greatly facilitate the planning of the event, and it will be greatly appreciated.

In Brief

Talks on Cyprus Reunification Failed

The latest round of talks in Switzerland between Cyprus president Anastasiadis and the leader of the Turkish Cypriots Akinci on the reunification of the divided island failed to reach an agreement.

A United Nations statement on November 22, 2016 said: *"Despite their best efforts, they have not been able to achieve the necessary further convergences on criteria for territorial adjustment that would have paved the way for the last phase of the talks. The two sides have decided to return to Cyprus and reflect on the way forward."*

The Greek Cypriots sought the return of enough territory to enable 90,000 displaced people – out of the 200,000 Greek Cypriots who were pushed out of Northern Cyprus by the Turks - to return to their homes and their properties. Even though there was said to be a consensus that the jurisdiction of Turkish Cypriots would range between 28.2 and 29.2 percent of the territory, the Turkish-Cypriot delegation brought the number of those allowed to return down to 55,000-60,000.

In addition to territorial adjustments, the Greek Cypriots are adamant that an agreement should include the withdrawal of Turkish occupying forces from the island.

Of course behind the intransigence of the Turkish Cypriots is Turkey that controls the occupied North of the island, and insists in keeping the island under its thumb.

Greeks Protest Repossession of Homes

Tens of thousands of Greeks are fighting to save their homes as a wave of repossessions has struck this year. Greek homeowners and their supporters have been staging demonstrations against auctions across the

country. Protesters gather outside Greek courts, blocking access to legal staff, barging into courtrooms and, on occasion, clashing with the riot police.

Auctions began in September, when Greek lawyers returned to work after a nine-month strike over cuts to their pensions. The head of the borrowers' association, Vangelis Kritikos, said about 50,000 properties would be up for repossession next year. "*People are panicking,*" he said. "*Every day we get about 500 calls.*"

Greek banks hold 108 billion euros (about \$119 billion) in bad loans - about 50% of all loans given out - of which 41 percent are delinquent mortgages. The country's creditors have pressed the government to allow the auction of delinquent debtors' properties, to collect billions of euros that could be used to prop up Greek banks that are in a precarious state. They have already been recapitalized three times in three years.

Legislation passed last year prevents banks from repossessing homes with a taxable value of up to 180,000 euros, increasing by 20,000 for each child in the household. Government officials have suggested that a similar scheme could be adopted to prevent families losing their main home because of debts to the state, like unpaid taxes and social security contributions. On the other hand, there are concerns that an attempt to halt repossessions could protect delinquent debtors who have money but refuse to pay their debts.

Yannis Stournaras, the head of Greece's central bank, stated recently that "*tackling the high stock of nonperforming loans is the greatest challenge facing the Greek banking system and the Greek economy.*"

Greek bank officials have proposed that auctions be conducted electronically to overcome the problem posed by angry protesters at courthouses (source: *New York Times*, *Kathimerini*).

Fake Prescriptions

Inspections in the public Greek health system have revealed that Greek doctors from different areas of the country were issuing prescriptions for patches to fake patients. Because the health system requires with the submission of the prescription also the submission of the patient's picture, these doctors were submitting fake pictures taken from the internet. It has been estimated that this scheme has cost the public health system over twelve million euros (source: *Huffington Post Greece*).

Greece Leader in Shipping

Greece remains the global leader in shipping, as the latest annual report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) shows that the share of the global merchant fleet owned by Greeks in terms of capacity has risen from 16.1 percent in 2015 to

16.36 percent this year.

Greek shipowners control a total of 4,136 vessels, up from 4,017 ships a year earlier - i.e. an annual increase of 119 ships or almost 3 percent. However, only 728 of those ships bear the Greek flag, down from 796 last year.

Greece out of Recession

The Gross National Product of Greece (GDP) has plunged from 242.1 billion euros in 2008 to 185.1 billion in 2015. Its continuous downfall was interrupted by a small positive blip of 0.7% in the second quarter of 2014, another one of 1.2% in the fourth quarter of the same year, another one of 0.7% in the first quarter of 2015, and another one of 1.2 % in the first quarter of 2016. For the first time since 2008, the Greek economy grew in two consecutive quarters in 2016: by 0.3% in the second quarter and by 0.5% in the third quarter. This meets the formal definition of the termination of a recession. Hopefully this positive trend, although anemic at this time, it will continue to lead into a sustainable growth.

From Our History

Some of the Critical Developments that Led to the Division of Cyprus.

(Main Sources: M. S. Michael, Resolving the Cyprus Conflict; P. G. Polyviou, Cyprus, Conflict and Negotiation, 1960-1980)

Cyprus has been a part of the Greek world as far back as can be attested by recorded history. After the collapse of the Byzantine Empire and the defeat of the Venetians the island fell to Ottoman rule from 1571 to 1878. In 1878 it was placed under British administration, was annexed by Britain in 1914, and in 1925 became a British colony. Greek Cypriots joined the mainland Greeks in the wars of independence against the Ottomans, and the British played with Greece and the Greek Cypriots the idea of Cyprus' enosis with Greece a number of times when this served their interests, to afterwards turn the other way.

During World War II the British capitalizing on the desire of Greek Cypriots for union (enosis) with Greece recruited Cypriots with the slogan, "*Fight for Freedom and Greece.*" Many Cypriots joined the specially formed Cyprus Regiment in the hope that the Greek-British partnership would aid the realization of enosis.

At the end of the war, the Greek government prepared its territorial claims—the acquisition of Cyprus was second on their list after the Dodecanese. Greece evidently had "*no desire*" to embarrass Britain and believed an arrangement could be found by which "*certain strategic rights and bases could be leased (back) to Britain.*" U.S. policy at the time favored the island's cession to Greece,

provided this was satisfactory to Britain, and that it *"protected the security of non-Greek inhabitants and the lines of communication in the eastern Mediterranean."*

The Cold War further catapulted Cyprus's strategic significance beyond the British realm into the Western Alliance's frontline. In a major policy revision, the new Labour Cabinet was adamant that the Middle East would remain under Britain's sphere of influence, and that it would resist U.S. infiltration. The Middle East was vital to British imperial interests: it formed a central junction of land, air, and sea communication, linking Britain with India, the Far East, and Australasia; and it constituted the empire's main oil reserve. In this highly sensitive region, Cyprus was the only territory under full British sovereignty. In 1946, the Attlee Government considered Cyprus to be one of the six vital points in its global empire strategy. Planning against a possible clash with the Soviet Union in the oil-rich Middle East, Cyprus was considered even *"more important than Haifa."*

Probing British decision-making at the time, we can ascertain that Britain's refusal to cede Cyprus to Greece stemmed from its desire to remain a power in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, particularly in the face of a Soviet threat to that predominance. A third geopolitical factor accompanied these two considerations; the fear that Greece might succumb to communist control. This view was shared by the United States, which by September 1947 was making contingency plans in the event that Greece fell to communism. By 1948, the State Department and the British Foreign office jointly assessed that the *"security of the whole Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East would be jeopardized if the Soviet Union should succeed in its efforts to obtain control"* of either Italy, Greece, Turkey, or Iran. As a result, the State Department recommended that the United States should *"support the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East"* and that such a policy was impractical unless Britain retained its *"strong strategic, political and economic position"* in the region.

On reflection, C. M. Woodhouse believes that *"in 1945 the cession could have been carried out painlessly, and even with public approval."* And although interdepartmental rivalry between the Colonial and Foreign offices is revealing, in the end it was Cabinet that determined governmental policy, adopting the military's position, which was consistently anti-*énois* (against union).

Despite Greek Cypriot expectations that Attlee's Labour government would implement its commitment to self-determination in the colonies, ultimately the British government was unwilling to relinquish Cyprus.

British attempts to settle the Cyprus problem during the post war period were a response to *énois*. For, as

Thomas Ehrlich pointed out, until 1958 *énois* was the only noteworthy alternative to British sovereignty. But the British *"began by badly underestimating the strength of Enosis feeling"* and treated it *"as if it were a kind of hobby of Greek-Cypriots and far too insignificant to affect the majesty of worldwide British rule."* Initially, the British misjudged the allure of *énois* among the masses and hastily dismissed its capacity to mobilize Greek Cypriots and seriously challenge British hegemony.

The Suez crisis once again determined Britain's policy toward Cyprus. British withdrawal from the Suez Canal and Egypt, in conjunction with political uncertainty over its other bases, provoked the first public debate over the whole question of its overseas bases. The Foreign Office argued for the continued stationing of British troops in Cyprus, as the only non-Arab territory that exercised real influence on the surrounding region. The British Government was adamant that its overseas bases must be retained, even against their inhabitants' wishes. Military advice to Prime Minister Anthony Eden was that Cyprus was *"an essential point for the maintenance of [the British] position in the Middle East, including the Persian Gulf. Given Britain's and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) dependence on Middle East oil, Britain had to retain its influence and prestige in the region,"* and Cyprus had to be maintained as *"the only possible base for operations in that part of the world."* Between 1954 and 1956 Britain evacuated its Suez Canal Base and transformed Cyprus into its Middle East Army and Air Force Command Headquarters. After the Suez debacle, Harold Macmillan concluded that the United States was more important than Europe for Britain's Middle East military policy. As an air base, Cyprus would support the southern flank of NATO and the Baghdad Pact, with the clear understanding that Cyprus's future in any Middle East defense plan would remain a British prerogative. Furthermore, the military's assessment was that after the losses of the Suez Canal and the Indian subcontinent, Britain's strategic position was at a *"bare minimum."* The loss of any of their bases in Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Aden, or the Maldivian Islands would have created *"an irreparable gap"* in Britain's global defense capability.

After 1951, the United States urged Britain to improve its Air Force facilities in Cyprus, in order to link the island into a comprehensive Allied Mediterranean command, in which the role of Greece and Turkey would be crucial. For President Dwight Eisenhower, the Cyprus question was important only with respect to its potential impact on the British-Greek-Turkish NATO relationship. The United States was unwilling to allow the Cyprus dispute to disrupt its relations with Britain, which was seen as the main protector of the West's interests in the Middle East.

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry by Constantine Cavafy

Η ΣΑΤΡΑΠΕΙΑ

Τι συμφορά, ενώ είσαι καμωμένος
για τα ωραία και μεγάλα έργα
η άδικη αυτή σου η τύχη πάντα
ενθάρρυνσι κ' επιτυχία να σε αρνείται
να σ' εμποδίζουν ευτελείς συνήθειες,
και μικροπρέπειες, κι αδιαφορίες.
Και τι φρικτή η μέρα που ενδίδεις,
(η μέρα που αφέθηκες κι ενδίδεις),
και φεύγεις οδοιπόρος για τα Σούσα,
και πηαίνεις στον μονάρχη Artaxerxes
που ευνοϊκά σε βάζει στην αυλή του,
και σε προσφέρει σατραπείες και τέτοια.
Και συ τα δέχεσαι με απελπισία
αυτά τα πράγματα που δεν τα θέλεις.
Άλλα ζητεί η ψυχή σου, γι' άλλα κλαίει
τον έπαινο του Δήμου και των Σοφιστών,
τα δύσκολα και τ' ανεκτίμητα Εύγε,
την Αγορά, το Θέατρο, και τους Στεφάνους.
Αυτά πού θα σ' τα δώσει ο Artaxerxes,
αυτά πού θα τα βρείς στη σατραπεία
και τι ζωή χωρίς αυτά θα κάμεις;

ΙΩΝΙΚΟΝ

Γιατί τα σπάσαμε τ' αγάλματά των,
γιατί τους διώξαμε απ' τους ναούς των,
διόλου δεν πέθαναν γι' αυτό οι θεοί.
Ω γη της Ιωνίας, σένα αγαπούν ακόμη,
σένα η ψυχές των ενθυμούνται ακόμη.
Σαν ξημερώνει επάνω σου πραι αυγουστιάτικο
την ατμοσφαιρα σου περνά σφρίγος απ' την ζωή των
Και κάποτ' αιθέρια εφηβική μορφή,
αόριστη, με διάβα γρήγορο,
επάνω από τους λόφους σου περνά.

ΚΕΡΙΑ

Του μέλλοντος η μέρες στέκοντ' εμπροστά μας
σα μια σειρά κεράκια αναμένα –
χρυσά, ζεστά, και ζωνηρά κεράκια.

Η περασμένες μέρες πίσω μένουν,
μια θλιβερή γραμμή κεριών σβυσμένων
τα πιο κοντά βγάζουν καπνόν ακόμη,
κρύα κεριά, λυωμένα, και κυρτά.

Δεν θέλω να τα βλέπω, με λυπεί η μορφή των,
και με λυπεί το πρώτο φως των να θυμούμαι.
Επρός κυττάζω τ' αναμένα μου κεριά.

Δεν θέλω να γυρίσω να μη δω και φρίξω
τι γρήγορα που η σκοτεινή γραμμή μακραίνει,
τι γρήγορα που τα σβυστά κεριά πληθαίνουν.

THE SATRAPY

What a misfortune, though you are made
for fine and grand deeds
this unjust fate of yours always
denies you encouragement and success;
low habits, and pettiness
and unconcern impede you.
And how awful the day when you yield,
(the day you give up and yield),
and leave on foot to Susa,
and go to monarch Artaxerxis
who receives you favourably,
and offers you satrapies and such things.
And you accept them in despair
those things you don't want.
For your spirit needs and weeps for other things;
the praise of the Public and the Sophists,
the stiff and priceless Well Done,
the Agora, the Theatre and the Laurels.
How can Artaxerxis give you these,
where in a satrapy could you find such things
and what an existence will you lead without these?

IONIAN

What did we break their statues for,
why did we expel them from their temples,
thereby gods have by no means died.
Soil of Ionia, they are still fond of you,
their very souls still long for you.
When the August dawn surrounds you
their vigorous existence penetrates your aura;
and sometimes an ethereal adolescent figure,
indistinct, in rapid stride,
emerges above your hills.

CANDLES

The days of the future stand before us
as a row of little lighted candles-
golden, warm, lively little candles.

The past days reside behind,
a distressing row of extinct candles;
the more nearby still fume,
cold candles, disfigured, and curved.

I don't want to see them; their figure weigh on me,
being distressed to recollect their first light.
I just behold my kindled candles before me.

I don't want to turn around steal a glance and be horrified
how speedily the dark line lengthens,
how rapidly the extinct candles multiply.