

# NEWSLETTER

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## HELLENIC LINK Midwest

A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC  
LINK WITH GREECE



### *Upcoming Events*

#### **Celebration of Greek Independence Day**

In celebration of the Greek Independence day, Hellenic Link –Midwest, will present on Sunday, March 18, 2001, the Theater Nefeli in the play *The Solemn Vow (Η Ιερή Υπόσχεση)*; 3:00 PM at the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint John in Desplaines, Illinois. The celebration will close with Greek dances by the Orpheus Dance Troupe.

In 1920, the victorious Greek Army, in pursue of the goals of the Revolution of 1821, realized the Great Dream of Hellenism: the liberation of the Hellenic Lands at the other side of the Aegean. Alas, this magnificent achievement ended with The Great Catastrophe of Asia Minor. The Solemn Vow, written and directed by Nancy Athanasopoulou - Mylonas, is a tribute to the courage and determination of the Hellenes of Asia Minor. Uprooted from their homeland, and with many of their loved having fallen prey to the wolves of Attila, they picked the pieces of their lives and vowed (έδωσαν την Ιερή Υπόσχεση) to keep alive the flame of the Hellenism of Asia Minor: their traditions, their music, their dances, their songs, and everything that was the Hellas of the Lost Homelands.

The *Solemn Vow* is the great drama of the uprooted Hellenism told in prose (a cast of fifteen with a chorus of nine) and in song and dance (a live orchestra with four bouzoukis, guitar, toubeleki, and three singers).

The Theater Nefeli of the Greek Community of Toronto has won many distinctions, including: the coveted Karolos Koun Award in the 1993 Pan Hellenic Theater Competition in Athens, Greece; the first prize in the Chin International Folklore Competition for 1996; and in 1998 the first prize of the University of Crete in a theatrical competition involving the Hellenic theaters of the U.S.A., Australia, Ukraine, Germany, and Canada. Nefeli has won the love and admiration of those in our Community who attended their performances in March 1997, and 1999. Besides performing at home in Toronto, they have performed in Montreal, Athens, Thessaloniki, Kalamata, Boston, and Washington DC. The group's objectives are to promote Greek Performing Arts to mainstream audiences by producing bi-lingual productions, to share their experiences with people

interested in Greek Theater, and to develop new scripts pertinent to the Greek Canadian experience.

Nancy Athanassopoulos-Mylonas was born in Cairo, Egypt, and migrated with her family to Sydney, Australia. A trained classical dancer, opened her own School of Movement in 1966 where she taught classical dance, modern dance and mime. In 1975 she founded the School of Greek Folklore Ltd. where she taught Greek traditional and modern dances, dance theater and modern dance. Nancy has traveled throughout Australia teaching, directing and producing many cultural presentations for the various Greek Communities. She has taught Folk dancing and Dance Theater at various public schools across Australia and has lectured to multicultural organizations and institutions on Greek culture. As an actress, Nancy has played major roles on stage and mainstream Australian Television. But her love lies in stage work. She is the recipient of numerous awards while a resident of Australia, including the *Order Of The Medal Of Australia* in recognition of 25 years of service in the arts through Greek Folklore. Nancy came to Toronto at the end of October 1990 with her husband who served at the Greek Consulate. She has been there since, as the director and choreographer of the Greek Community Theater Nefeli. She believes in her Community, being herself the offspring of a very progressive and dedicated Community...*The Greeks From Egypt*.

#### **Images of the Greeks**

On Sunday, April 22, 2001, Hellenic Link - Midwest presents the distinguished professor of history Speros Vryonis, Jr., in a lecture on "*Images of the Greeks from the Time of the Enlightenment and Turkish Propaganda*"; 3:00 PM, Embassy Suites Hotel, 600 North State Street in Chicago.

Since the European Enlightenment of the 18th century and the American and French Revolutions, certain concepts of the modern nation and state, its organization and function have come into being. These include, among other things, the need of the modern state to gather effectively all the citizens so that the state can maximize the energies, obedience, taxation, and military service of the new citizen. Thus, the obligations and rights of the citizen had to be integrated into state policy. These components were further

strengthened by Romanticism and Nationalism, which created an ideology and a system of education, which attempted, very successfully, to forge a unified national ideology. This most often succeeded in bridging class differences, but most often did not succeed in erasing ethnic differences.

Today national governments, through control of or influence on education, but above all on the mass media, are in a position not only to enforce policies and agendas, but also to form public opinion.

Against this background, Professor Vryonis will examine the relations of Greece, Turkey and the United States within the framework of the Cold War, its aftermath, and against the war on terrorism. The accompanying propaganda war and the efforts of the governments of each of these nations to influence their own publics, and the efforts of the United States to enforce its policies on the other two nations are all stridently marked by the use and abuse of the public media and the systems of education. This can be measured even by the amounts of public revenues dedicated to this propaganda war, and the efforts to affect the behavior of the American public in one way or another.

*Professor Vryonis* was born in 1928, in Memphis, Tennessee of Greek emigrant parents from Kefhalonia. He received his BA from Southwestern College at Memphis, and his MA and Ph.D from Harvard and Dumbarton Oaks, 1951-1956. He was Professor of History at UCLA from 1960 to 1988, Alexander S. Onasis Professor and Director of the Onasis Center at the New York University from 1988 to 1995, and Director of Gustave von Grunebau Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA from 1972 to 1976 and from 1979 to 1992. Since 1996 he is Director of the Vryonis Center for Hellenism. Professor Vryonis has also taught at Harvard, University of Chicago, and the University of Athens, Greece. He has received numerous awards and honorary professional society memberships. Professor Vryonis, a distinguished scholar on Byzantine History, has written over 150 scholarly articles, and many books, on Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, Islam, Turkey and Greece. He has a number of books in preparation, including Images of the Greeks from the Enlightenment to the Twenty-First Century.

## ***In Brief***

### **Vandals Demolish Greek School in Albania**

The night of January 16, 2001, unknown vandals broke into the Greek school of Vrysero in the Gjirokastr area. On a rampage of destruction, they burned books and desks, broke doors and windows, and even knocked down the

ceiling. A similar attempt had been made against the school three days earlier, but for some reason had not been carried out in full. The school served pupils in five of the surrounding villages and was one of the best preserved Greek schools in Gjirokastr, Durres and Sarande, having undergone a radical overhaul two years ago. In recent years, it had also served as a center for events of the local Greek community.

According to community leader Panayiotis Lioulios, the school helped inspire a sense of relative optimism about the future of education for the Greek minority of Albania, and the vandalism "creates a negative climate for the remaining (in Albania) Greek pupils and teachers."

### **Greece to Spend 180 Billion Drachmas in Balkan Aid**

Greece's five-year Balkan restructuring plan envisages spending a total of 180 billion drachmas. The money will be spent to support social and financial infrastructure, and services and production. The plan envisages the spending of 17 billion on aid to Albania, 18.5 billion in Bulgaria, 25.5 billion in FYROM, 24 billion in Romania, 70 billion in Yugoslavia (excluding Kosovo), and 25 billion in Kosovo.

### **A Meeting of Greek and Turkish Cypriot Political Parties**

In a meeting organized by the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Cyprus, leaders and representatives of ten Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties discussed the United Nations led proximity talks on the Cyprus problem. In a joint statement issued on January 22, 2001, the leaders and representatives of the parties "call upon the leaders of the two communities to respond positively to the UN Secretary-General's appeal for the continuation of the talks". Rauf Denktash, the leader of the pseudostate of Northern Cyprus has refused to participate in the next round of talks.

### **Greece's Population is Aging**

The annual demographic report of the Council of Europe (CoE) for 2000, covering the 41 member-states, as well as Belarus, Bosnia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, concludes that Greece's population shows significant aging rates, while Greece has low rates in suicides and births outside wedlock.

In 2000, the countries having the highest percentages of people above 65 were Italy with 18.3 percent, Sweden with 17.3 and Greece with 17.2. The main reasons for the aging populations in these countries were a distinct decrease in

the birth rate, and the continuously increasing life expectancy.

In particular in Greece, Italy and Spain, the percentage of elderly people is now higher than that of underage children. Moreover, Greece, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Albania and Malta have the lowest suicide rates with three suicides per 100,000 people.

Cyprus and Greece have the lowest percentages of children born out of wedlock, two percent of births in Cyprus and four percent in Greece.

### **Food for Thought**

*Greek-American Pioneer Women of Illinois*, edited by Elaine Thomopoulos, showcases the life stories of immigrant pioneer women, their families, friends, and the emerging Greek-American community of Illinois. To obtain a book, please contact The Greek Women's University Club, c/o Barbara Javaras, 7223 Oak St., River Forest, IL 60305 (\$23 payable to GWUC).

Professor George Kourvetaris informs his friends that they can buy his books and special issues of *The Journal Of Political And Military Sociology* by contacting him at tkogaki@corn.cso.niu.edu.

### ***From Our History***

#### **From the Preface of the Poem *Hellas* by the English Poet Percy B. Shelley**

*Shelley, an admirer of Hellenism, wrote the poem Hellas in 1821, convinced that the Revolution of 1821 would lead to "the final triumph of the Greek cause as a portion of the cause of civilisation and social improvement". He deeply believed that modern Europe owed all the best that it was, or could hope to be to "the influence of those glorious generations" of ancient Greeks.*

The apathy of the rulers of the civilised world to the astonishing circumstance of the descendants of that nation to which they owe their civilisation, rising as it were from the ashes of their ruin, is something perfectly inexplicable to a mere spectator of the shows of this mortal scene. We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their root in Greece. But for Greece – Rome, the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolaters; or, what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social institution as China and Japan possess.

The human form and the human mind attained to a perfection in Greece, which has impressed its image on those faultless productions, whose very fragments are the despair of modern art, and has propagated impulses which cannot cease, through a thousand channels of manifest or imperceptible operation, to ennoble and delight mankind until the extinction of the race.

The Modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind, and he inherits much of their sensibility, their rapidity of conception, their enthusiasm, and their courage. If in many instances he is degraded by moral and political slavery to the practice of the basest vices it engenders – and that below the level of ordinary degradation – let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution may be expected to cease as soon as that relation is dissolved. In fact, the Greeks, since the admirable novel of *Anastasius* could have been a faithful picture of their manners, have undergone most important changes; the flower of their youth, returning to their country from the universities of Italy, Germany, and France, have communicated to their fellow-citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source. The University of Chios contained before the breaking out of the revolution eight hundred students, and among them several Germans and Americans. The munificence and energy of many of the Greek princes and merchants, directed to the renovation of their country with a spirit and a wisdom which has few examples, is above all praise.

The English permit their own oppressors to act according to their natural sympathy with the Turkish tyrant, and to brand upon their name the indelible blot of an alliance with the enemies of domestic happiness, of Christianity and civilisation.

Russia desires to possess, not to liberate Greece; and is contented to see the Turks, its natural enemies, and the Greeks, its intended slaves, enfeeble each other until one or both fall into its net. The wise and generous policy of England would have consisted in establishing the independence of Greece, and in maintaining it both against Russia, and the Turk; – but when was the oppressor generous or just?

Should the English people ever become free, they will reflect upon the part which those who presume to represent their will have played in the great drama of the revival of liberty, with feelings which it would become them to anticipate. This is the age of the war of the

oppressed against the oppressors, and every one of those ringleaders of the privileged gangs of murderers and swindlers, called Sovereigns, look to each other for aid against the common enemy, and suspend their mutual jealousies in the presence of a mightier fear. Of this holy alliance all the despots of the earth are virtual members. But a new race has arisen throughout Europe, nursed in the abhorrence of the opinions which are its chains, and she will continue to produce fresh generations to accomplish that destiny which tyrants foresee and dread.

The Spanish Peninsula is already free. France is tranquil in the enjoyment of a partial exemption from the abuses which its unnatural and feeble government are vainly

attempting to revive. The seed of blood and misery has been sown in Italy, and a more vigorous race is arising to go forth to the harvest. The world waits only the news of a revolution of Germany to see the tyrants who have pinnacled themselves on its supineness precipitated into the ruin from which they shall never arise. Well do these destroyers of mankind know their enemy, when they impute the insurrection in Greece to the same spirit before which they tremble throughout the rest of Europe, and that enemy well knows the power and the cunning of its opponents, and watches the moment of their approaching weakness and inevitable division to wrest the bloody sceptres from their grasp.

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## *From The Riches of Our Cultural Heritage*

### *AN OLD MAN ON THE RIVER BANK*

By George Seferis

And yet we should consider how we go forward.  
To feel is not enough, nor to think, nor to move  
nor to put your body in danger in front of an old loophole  
when scalding oil and molten lead furrow the walls.

And yet we should consider towards what we go forward,  
not as our pain would have it, and our hungry children  
and the chasm between us and the companions calling from  
the opposite shore;  
nor the whispering of the bluish light in an improvised  
hospital,  
the pharmaceutical glimmer on the pillow of the youth  
operated upon at noon;  
but it should be in some other way, I would say like  
the long river that emerges from the great lakes enclosed deep  
in Africa,  
that was once a god and then became a road and a benefactor,  
a judge and a delta;  
that is never the same, as the ancient wise men taught,  
and yet always remains the same body, the same bed, and  
the same Sign,  
the same orientation.

I want no more than to speak simply, to be granted that grace.  
because we've loaded even our songs with so much music  
that they're slowly sinking  
and we've decorated our art so much that its features have  
been eaten away by gold  
and it's time to say our few words because tomorrow the soul  
sets sail.

If pain is human we are not human beings merely to suffer  
pain;  
that's why I think so much these days about the great river,  
that symbol which moves forward among herbs and  
greenery  
and beasts that graze and drink, men who sow and harvest,  
great tombs even and small habitations of the dead.  
That current which goes its way and which is not so  
different from the blood of men,  
from the eyes of men when they look straight ahead without  
fear in their hearts,  
without the daily tremor for trivialities or even for  
important things;  
when they look straight ahead like the traveler who is used  
to gauging his way by the stars,  
not like us, the other day, gazing at the enclosed garden of  
a sleepy Arab house,  
behind the lattices the cool garden changing shape, growing  
larger and smaller,  
we too changing, as we gazed, the shape of our desire and  
our hearts,  
at the tip of midday, we the patient dough of a world that  
throws us out and kneads us,  
caught in the embroidered nets of a life that was whole  
and then became dust and sank into the sands  
leaving behind it only that vague dizzying sway of a tall  
palm-tree.

*Cairo, 20 June '42*