



HELLENIC LINK – MIDWEST Newsletter

A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

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Upcoming Events

Islam And The West

On Sunday, December 14, at 3:00 PM, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Mustapha Kamal, Lecturer in Arabic at The University of Illinois at Chicago, in a lecture titled: *Islam and the West*. This lecture will be held at Four Point Sheraton Hotel, 10255 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park (corner of Irving and Manheim by O'Hare airport, phone: 847 671 4230).

Since 9/11/2001, the issue of the relations between Islam and the West has come to the surface with great urgency. In his lecture, Dr. Kamal will show how, from its inception, Islam contributed to world civilization, will discuss Islam's basic principles (such as the five pillars of Islam), its beginnings, and its appeal to the disenfranchised classes in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century. He will address issues that are hotly debated in Muslim societies, such as: Islam and democracy; the situation of women in Muslim societies; Islam and human rights; and other issues related to Islam and civil society. Lastly, he will give a cursory view of the relationships between Greek and Muslim cultures in the Middle Ages. Even though Muslim intellectuals had high regards for Greek philosophy (they called Aristotle: the First Teacher), Greek literature, however, did not enjoy the same favor. As an example, Averroes, the great Muslim philosopher of the 12th c., while writing his great commentaries on Aristotle's poetics, was unable to understand these two words: tragedy and comedy. Instead of immersing himself in Greek literature in order to explore what the Greeks meant, he explained the two words in terms of Arabic literature. This lapse on Averroes' part made the great Argentine writer, to speak of a missed opportunity.

Mustapha Kamal was born in Casablanca, and earned his B.A. in English literature from Rabat University, Morocco, in 1974. In 1993, he was admitted in the Department of Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley. In 1994, he earned his M.A. in Arabic literature and Old Provençal; and in 2000, he was granted a Ph.D. in Arabic, Old French and Medieval Spanish literatures. He taught Arabic and World literatures at the University of Chicago from 1998 to 2002, and since 2002, he has been teaching Arabic at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Annual Dinner Dance - Scholarship Awards

The 17th Annual Dinner Dance, New Year Celebration, and Scholarship Awards of Hellenic Link–Midwest will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2004, at the Four Point Sheraton Hotel, 10255 West Irving Road at Schiller Park. 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. Our Dinner Dances are distinguished for the excellent food, the unique kefi, and the fine music. For tickets (including food and open bar), for adults \$55, and \$30 for children and students, please call 847 498-3686, or contact any of the Board Members.

In Brief

New Finds Link Thera Volcano Eruption to Collapse of Mycenaean Civilization

Scientists at Columbia University and the University of Hawaii have presented new findings renewing an older theory that the eruption of the volcano on the Greek island of Thera (Santorini) more than 3,000 years ago brought about the collapse of the flourishing Minoan civilization (The New York Times, October 21, 2003). According to this article, scholars have for decades debated whether the eruption of the Thera volcano in the Aegean more than 3,000 years ago brought about the mysterious collapse of Minoan civilization at the peak of its glory. The volcanic isle is just 70 miles from Crete, so it seemed quite reasonable that the fury of its volcanic eruption could have accounted for the fall of the Minoans. This idea suffered a blow in 1987 when Danish scientists studying cores from the Greenland icecap reported evidence that Thera exploded in 1645 B.C., some 150 years before the Minoan decline.

New findings, the University scientists say, show that Thera's upheaval was far more violent than previously calculated, many times larger than the 1883 Krakatoa eruption, which killed more than 36,000 people. They say the blast's cultural repercussions were equally large, rippling across the eastern Mediterranean for decades, even centuries.

"It had to have had a huge impact," according to Dr. Floyd W. McCoy, a University of Hawaii geologist, who has studied the eruption for decades, and recently proposed that it was much more violent than previously thought.

The scientists say Thera's outburst produced deadly waves and dense clouds of volcanic ash over a vast region, crippling ancient cities and fleets, setting off climate changes, ruining crops and sowing wide political unrest. For Minoan Crete, they see direct and indirect consequences. Dr. McCoy says that towering waves from the eruption that hit Crete were up to 50 feet high, smashing ports and fleets and severely damaging the maritime economy. Other scientists found indirect, long-term damage. Ash and global cooling from the volcanic pall caused wide crop failures in the eastern Mediterranean, they said, and the agricultural woes in turn set off political upheavals that undid Minoan friends and trade. The scientists who link Thera to the Minoan decline say the evidence is still emerging and in some cases sketchy.

UNICEF Highlights Problems of Racism and Xenophobia in Greek Schools

On October 22, 2003, the Greek Cooperation Committee with UNICEF pointed out that Greece is at a crucial crossroads in deciding as to whether it desires to be an open, multicultural society of creation and progress, or introverted, xenophobic and isolated. The Committee expresses its support for "all initiatives aimed at consolidating an open, tolerant and multicultural society, and rejecting prejudices, disbelief and fears, which defame our modern culture".

A recent report by UNICEF highlighted problems related to racism and xenophobia in Greek schools, and some of its conclusions include the following.

A total of 51.7 percent of parents declare that the presence of immigrants in Greek society is a cause for concern; 16.2 percent say the presence of the foreigners annoys them; while 42.6 percent consider the presence of immigrants' children at Greek schools as a natural development. Seven out of ten teachers and professors believe Greek teachers are not adequately trained to teach the children of immigrants. One out of three teachers and professors say that "out of experience they believe that discrimination takes place at Greek schools against foreign pupils." Only 38.1 percent of teachers believe that the children of foreigners should attend any Greek school. The majority believe that they should enroll in special classes for foreigners, or at a special school for foreigners.

On the other hand, 71.8 percent of pupils have a positive opinion of foreign pupils at their school. Six out of ten declare that they would not be bothered if a considerable number of foreign children attended their school, while 55.1 percent do not mind being in the same class with foreign pupils. In addition, 46.2 percent of pupils believe that children from other countries should be able to attend any

Greek school. Lastly, 48.6 percent of Greek pupils would object to a foreign pupil, who excels in his studies, holding the Greek flag during national holidays, while 34.1 percent would not object.

Settlement of the Cyprus Issue a Major Political Criterion for Turkey's Accession to the EU.

On November 5, 2003, the European Commission published its Regular Report on Turkey's progress towards accession to the EU. The report assesses Turkey's progress based on a number of political, economic and legal criteria. The overall assessment of Turkey was critical towards its performance on the human rights, democracy, civil rights and the protection of minorities chapters and particularly on the Cyprus issue.

The report reiterated "that efforts to resolve the Cyprus problem form part of the enhanced dialogue between the European Union and Turkey...The absence of a settlement could become a serious obstacle to Turkey's EU aspirations." In its recommendations, the Commission states: "As regards Cyprus, the European Council has repeatedly underlined its strong preference for accession by a united Cyprus...To this end the EU should reiterate its call to all parties concerned, in particular Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership, to resume the talks on the basis of the UN Secretary General's proposal...The Thessaloniki European Council stated the Union's willingness to accommodate the terms of a settlement in line with the principles on which the EU is founded." The report also condemns the framework agreement that Turkey signed on August 8, 2003, aiming to establish a customs union with the Northern part of Cyprus, and criticizes Turkey for not having honored yet its commitment in the Loizidou case.

The report acknowledges that "non-Moslem religious minorities continue to face serious obstacles with respect to legal status, property rights, and self management, and a ban on the training of clergy." Overall, "the Commission considers that Turkey does not yet fully meet the Copenhagen political criteria. A clear framework for guaranteeing political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights has not been fully established, and more efforts are needed to enhance the coherence of legal provisions and practice."

From Our History

From Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*

—*The Peloponnesian Congress*

The Athenians and Peloponnesians had these antecedent grounds of complaint against each other: the complaint of Corinth was that her colony of Potidaea, and Corinthian and Peloponnesian citizens within it, were being besieged; that of Athens against the Peloponnesians that they had incited a

town of hers, a member of her alliance and a contributor to her revenue, to revolt, and had come and were openly fighting against her on the side of the Potidaeans. For all this, war had not yet broken out: there was still truce for a while; for this was a private enterprise on the part of Corinth.

But the siege of Potidaea put an end to her inaction; she had men inside it: besides, she feared for the place. Immediately summoning the allies to Lacedaemon, she came and loudly accused Athens of breach of the treaty and aggression on the rights of Peloponnese. After extending the summons to any of their allies and others who might have complaints to make of Athenian aggression, the Lacedaemonians held their ordinary assembly, and invited them to speak. There were many who came forward and made their several accusations; among them the Megarians, in a long list of grievances, called special attention to the fact of their exclusion from the ports of the Athenian empire and the market of Athens, in defiance of the treaty. Last of all the Corinthians came forward, and having let those who preceded them inflame the Lacedaemonians, now followed with a speech to this effect:

“Lacedaemonians! the confidence which you feel in your constitution and social order, inclines you to receive any reflections of ours on other powers with a certain scepticism. Hence springs your moderation, but hence also the rather limited knowledge which you betray in dealing with foreign politics. Time after time was our voice raised to warn you of the blows about to be dealt us by Athens, and time after time, instead of taking the trouble to ascertain the worth of our communications, you contented yourselves with suspecting the speakers of being inspired by private interest. And so, instead of calling these allies together before the blow fell, you have delayed to do so till we are smarting under it; allies among whom we have not the worst title to speak, as having the greatest complaints to make, complaints of Athenian outrage and Lacedaemonian neglect.

We hope that none of you will consider these words or remonstrance to be rather words of hostility; men remonstrate with friends who are in error, accusations they reserve for enemies who have wronged them. Besides, we consider that we have as good a right as any one to point out a neighbor's faults, particularly when we contemplate the great contrast between the two national characters; a contrast of which, as far as we can see, you have little perception, having never yet considered what sort of antagonists you will encounter in the Athenians, how widely, how absolutely different from yourselves. The Athenians are addicted to innovation, and their designs are characterized by swiftness alike in conception and execution; you have a genius for keeping what you have got, accompanied by a total want of invention, and when forced to act you never go far enough. Again, they are adventurous beyond their power, and daring beyond their judgment, and in danger they are sanguine; your wont is to attempt less than is justified by your power, to mistrust even what is sanctioned by your judgment, and to

fancy that from danger there is no release. Further, there is promptitude on their side against procrastination on yours; they are never at home, you are never from it: for they hope by their absence to extend their acquisitions, you fear by your advance to endanger what you have left behind. They are swift to follow up a success, and slow to recoil from a reverse. Their bodies they spend ungrudgingly in their country's cause; their intellect they jealously husband to be employed in her service. A scheme unexecuted is with them a positive loss, a successful enterprise a comparative failure. The deficiency created by the miscarriage of an undertaking is soon filled up by fresh hopes; for they alone are enabled to call a thing hoped for a thing got, by the speed with which they act upon their resolutions. Thus they toil on in trouble and danger all the days of their life, with little opportunity for enjoying, being ever engaged in getting: their only idea of a holiday is to do what the occasion demands, and to them laborious occupation is less of a misfortune than the peace of a quiet life. To describe their character in a word, one might truly say that they were born into the world to take no rest themselves and to give none to others.

“Such is Athens, your antagonist. And yet, Lacedaemonians, you still delay, and fail to see that peace stays longest with those, who are not more careful to use their power justly than to show their determination not to submit to injustice. On the contrary, your ideal of fair dealing is based on the principle that if you do not injure others, you need not risk your own fortunes in preventing others from injuring you. Now you could scarcely have succeeded in such a policy even with a neighbor like yourselves; but in the present instance, as we have just shown, your habits are old-fashioned as compared with theirs. It is the law as in art, so in politics, that improvements ever prevail; and though fixed usages may be best for undisturbed communities, constant necessities of action must be accompanied by the constant improvement of methods. Thus it happens that the vast experience of Athens has carried her further than you on the path of innovation.

“Here, at least, let your procrastination end. For the present, assist your allies and Potidaea in particular, as you promised, by a speedy invasion of Attica, and do not sacrifice friends and kindred to their bitterest enemies, and drive the rest of us in despair to some other alliance. Such a step would not be condemned either by the gods who received our oaths, or by the men who witnessed them. The breach of a treaty cannot be laid to the people whom desertion compels to seek new relations, but to the power that fails to assist its confederate. But if you will only act, we will stand by you; it would be unnatural for us to change, and never should we meet with such a congenial ally. For these reasons choose the right course, and endeavor not to let Peloponnese under your supremacy degenerate from the prestige that it enjoyed under that of your ancestors.”

(to be continued)

From The Riches Of Our Cultural Heritage **Poetry of Constantine Kavafis**

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Gà ? a?a?deu???? ?a µ????µe t? ?a!

IN THE YEAR 200 B.C.

“Alexander, son of Philip, and the Greeks, except the
Lacedaemonians...”

We can very easily imagine
how utterly indifferent they were in Sparta
to this inscription, “except the Lacedaemonians.”
But it was natural. The Spartans were not
of those who would let themselves be led and ordered about
like highly paid servants. Besides,
a Panhellenic campaign without
a Spartan king as commander in chief
would not have appeared very important.
O, most assuredly, “except the Lacedaemonians”

That too is a stand. It is understood.

So, except the Lacedaemonians, at Granicus;
and then at Issus; and in the decisive battle
where the formidable army that the Persians
had massed at Arbela was swept away,
that had set out from Arbela for victory and was swept
away.

And out of the remarkable Panhellenic campaign,
victorious, brilliant in every way,
celebrated far and wide, glorious
as no other had ever been glorified,
the incomparable: we were born;
a vast new Greek world, a great new Greek world.

We, the Alexandrians, the Antiocheans,
the Seleucians, and the innumerable
rest of the Greeks of Egypt and of Syria,
and of Media, and Persia, and the many others.
With our extensive empire,
with the varied action of our thoughtful adaptations,
and our common Greek, our Spoken Language,
we carried it into the heart of Bactria, to the Indians.

Are we going to talk of Lacedaemonians now!