NEWS

Ο ΕΘΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΗΡΥΞ
ΓΡΑΦΕΙ ΤΗΝ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ
ΤΟΥ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ
ΑΠΟ ΤΟ 1915

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EU Tightens the Noose on Greece as New Bailout is Delayed

Time is running out on avoiding default as Troika demands more than promises

By Andy Dabilis
TNH Staff Writer

ATHENS – Despite passing tough new austerity measures in the face of violent protesters to keep lifeline loans coming, Greece's economic agony was extended after international lenders said they weren't satisfied and that most of a second pending bailout may have to go to banks first.

The Troika of the European Union-International Monetary Fund-European Central Bank (EU-IMF-ECB) also said it may want to have a permanent office here to keep overseeing Greek finances after officials of the Eurozone, the 17 countries who use the euro as a currency and are putting up most of the money in a first rescue package of $152 billion and a proposed second bailout of $169 billion which was put on hold, meet on Feb. 20 in Brussels.

Greece's coalition government, led by former ECB Vice-President Lucas Papademos, convinced a rebellious Parliament to approve a cut in the minimum wage of up to 32 percent and the eventual end of collective bargaining rights, which could see private sector wages fall drastically to match 30 percent pay cuts for public workers. That came as more than 100,000 demonstrators rallied against the measures and anarchists and arsonists burned 48 buildings, including the century-old iconic Attikon cinema.

Papademos, whose shaky coalition now includes only holdover ministers from the former ruling PASOK Socialists and their bitter rival New Democracy conservatives after a third partner, the far Right-Wing LAOS party defected in opposition to the austerity, said if Greece had not agreed that the country would have defaulted and fallen into chaos and been pushed out of the Eurozone even though it is already broke and depending on foreign aid to survive.

Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos, a Socialist who has doubled property and income taxes, had also warned that if Greece hadn't passed the measures that it wouldn't have time to prepare a write down in of as much as 70 percent of the country's debt as part of the second bailout, nor get the next aid installment needed to pay an $18.2 billion loan due on March 20, or keep paying workers and pensioners. Greece missed the deadline he said was critical when the EU said it wanted written commitments from Greece's leaders that the deal would not change after elections are held to replace the coalition, tentatively set for some time in

Continued on page 9



AP PHOTO/DIMITRI MESSINIS

The Tsiknopempti Holiday Heralds Lent; This Year it Points to Many Leaner Days

People line up for free meat in Athens on Thursday Feb. 16, 2012. It's called "Barbecue Thursday" – a raucous pre-Easter celebration for meat lovers. But this year's Tsiknopempti festivities, a fixture of the Carnival season, brought sobering reminders of Greece's financial crisis. Athens this week set up an open-air grill for its citizens, but the revelry quickly resembled a scene from a food bank as hundreds of elderly Greeks jostled for a plastic plate of free food and glass of wine poured out of the barrell – eager to take advantage of the freebies as they pinch pennies in the economic gloom.

Gage Examines Shiponwners' Role in the Crisis

By Nicholas Gage
Town and Country Magazine

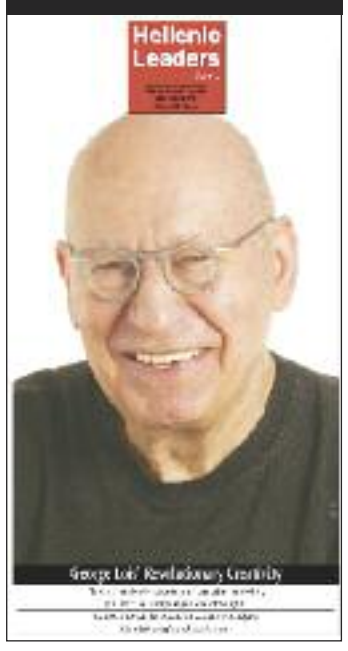
Since the days of Homer, the fate of Greece has depended on the will of sailors. But what are the shipowners of the present, who control more than 15 percent of the world's freight, doing to save the country whose flags they fly (well, depending on the tax situation)? Can the great Greek shipping magnates rescue the birthplace of civilization once again?

Like most of their countrymen, shipping tycoons are normally expansive and loquacious individuals, happy to talk to the press. In the tradition of their predecessors Aristotle Onassis and Stavros Niarchos, they tend to brag about their wealth, their art collections, their palatial homes, and the fact that Greek shipowners command the biggest merchant fleet on earth and that their vessels reach every corner of the planet.

"Ninety-five percent of all goods transported in the world today are carried by ships, and Greeks own 17 percent of those ships," boasts Nicos Vernicos, a fourth-generation shipowner. "That means that 15 percent of all goods transported are carried on Greek ships. In this one thing, and this one thing only, we are ahead of every other country on earth." (The Japanese, with nearly 16 percent of shipping, are a close second.) But these days, getting Greek shipowners to talk about their wealth—or how they might pitch in to help solve the massive economic problems of a country teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, the aftershocks from which would threaten the financial health of the entire European Union—is like trying to interview ayatollahs in Iran

Continued on page 6

WITH THIS ISSUE



Greece's Ambassador to US, Vassilis Kaskarelis, Appears on PBS Program

TNH Staff

The images from Greece over the past weekend stunned the world once again. Now that the Greek Parliament has approved a new set austerity measures – triggering the protests that became riots – the media, and its readers and viewers, wonder what is next for Greece. On PBS's NewsHour this week, Jeffrey Brown talked with Greece's ambassador to the United States, Vassilis Kaskarelis, about the protests and the potential impact of the austerity plan. The full transcript follows:

VASSILIS KASKARELIS, Greek ambassador to the United States: Thank you very much. And thank you for the invitation.

JEFFREY BROWN: We just saw some stunning pictures of rioting in the streets in Athens. Many people in your country seem unwilling to accept the austerity measures. How serious is this moment for your country?

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: The situation is quite serious.

But, on the other hand, there are extremists in every single country. And these deplorable acts were provoked yesterday by very small, but very well-organized groups of anarchists. The vast majority of Greek people were demonstrating peacefully yesterday in the streets of Athens, waiting for the outcome from the voting of the parliament.

So, of course, we do see on the screens, on the monitors the damages, fires, but this really on the ground is limited.

JEFFREY BROWN: Well, the fear, of course, of many Greeks is that these austerity measures will make things worse, will lock Greece into a long-term economic gloom. Do you think that that could be avoided?

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: It can be avoided. And we are already negotiating this aspect of the problem with our partners in Brussels and the IMF.

And Brussels has already decided to put – to earmark for Greece some $30 billion for development. Consequently, if we manage to absorb the money and put it in -- at work, I believe that the results could be positive and the situation would start to change as from next year.

At this point, what we have to do – and this is the most important – is to implement profound structural reforms.

JEFFREY BROWN: Are the

Continued on page 4

Cotros New Leadership 100 Chair

By Theodore Kalmoukos
TNH Staff Writer

PALM BEACH, FL – Charles Cotros, newly-elected Chairman of the Leadership 100 during the 21sth annual Conference of the Organization last week in Manalapan (Palm Beach area) FL, in an exclusive interview with TNH called the Conference "a success" and spoke about his vision for the Leadership's future.

Cotros is one of the leading Greek-Americans in the business sector. He was the CEO of SYSCO until eight years ago, and now he enjoys his retirement between Florida and his hometown in Memphis, TN – where he and his wife Connie were born.

Speaking about the Conference, Cotros said "it was excellent" and he explained that "we did some things differently, as the Organization keeps getting bigger, we bring in more peo-

Continued on page 4

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TNH/COSTAS BEJ

Nouriel Roubini, Guru of Wall Street, on Greek Crisis

The Hellenic American Bankers Association (HABA) in partnership with Bloomberg, LP, presented "Greece and the Eurozone: The Road-Map Ahead," by renowned economist Nouriel Roubini. See related story on page 3.

Eleni Gage Writes Debut Novel

TNH Staff

NEW YORK – Eleni Gage, whose acclaimed memoir <North of Ithaka> tells the story of her personal odyssey to the Northern Greek village of Lia, has penned her debut novel, <Other Waters>, published by St. Martin's Press on February 14.

After exploring her own Greek-American "tug of war between two homelands, two cultures, and two selves is a daily battle," in <North of Ithaka>, her first book, which was filled with tales of her efforts to rebuild the house of her father's birth, Gage's novel takes the reader into the world of Americans with roots in India.

<Other Waters> follows the story of "a young Indian-American doctor, Maya Das, who is caught between two very different worlds – the ostensibly scientific Western culture that guides her everyday life as a medical practitioner, and the faith-based Eastern tradition of her heritage, in which the mystical belief in curses, prayers, gods and goddesses is as real as medical knowledge," according to a release from St. Martin's Press

In a scenario painfully familiar to many Greek-Americans, the death of Maya's grandmother leads to a family fight over property rights. There is a spiritual dimension however, as the conflict generates a curse that Maya's father says threatens the entire Das clan.

Maya is a modern American woman who lives in New York City. Pursuing her psychiatry residency leaves her little time and even less patience for such matters. However, when her father "suffers a heart attack, her mother is hospitalized, her sister miscarries, her brother's marriage starts to falter, Maya faces a malpractice lawsuit, and her relationship with her longstanding boyfriend quickly falls apart," the release notes, Maya starts to take it more seriously.

"A trip back to India, to the source of this mysterious, poisonous energy, is just what's needed, she reasons, to remove the curse, save her family, and to put her own life back in order. A modern-day Austen heroine, Maya is determined to bend the world and other people's emotions to her will, but finds she must yield to the world's mysterious forces in order to find peace, true love, and self-discovery," according to St. Martin's Press.

Visits to India fleshed out Gage's research and fed her imagination and intuitions. The

Continued on page 2

Greek-Am. Composer Featured At Carnegie Hall

By Constantine S. Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – The evocative music of Greek-American composer Constantine Constantinides was presented at Weil Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall on February 12. The performance was part of the Distinguished Concert Artist Series and was performed by soloists from Louisiana State University (LSU).

Constantinides makes a point of presenting not only his works but promoting gifted musicians at his concerts. They rewarded him with wonderful performances of his pieces, with he calls neo-Romantic, though modern harmonies and sounds were present, especially with LSU's percussion group, Hamiruge.

If all music expresses human emotions and their interplay, some composers bring them out more than others, and a Greek can be expected to do them justice. Literature is about relationships and the events in our lives, dramatic and mundane, that make us who we are. Constantinides is one those composers who reminds us that musical creations, even without lyrics, are narratives, not merely the soundtrack of our lives.

The first piece, "Legend II for Alto Saxophone and Percussion," began with the drummer riding the cymbals and the sensuous strains of Griffin Campbell's saxophone. A luscious vibraphone entered, later joined by delightful marimba sounds. Unexpectedly, there was a somber moment, then a meditative passage succeeded by the vibes. The percussion then marched in unexpectedly, illustrating our days, weeks, and life stories.

There were chromatic rises and falls, the interplay of white and black notes transcending the do-re-mi of the whites alone, and then drums then re-established their place in the piece.

Continued on page 4



Andrea Tsoukalas was joined by family and colleagues and partners at her law firm when she was honored as one of L.I. Business News's 40 Under 40 at the 14th annual induction gala. (L-R), seated: Andrea's parents, Alexandros and Markella Tsoukalas, the awardee, Andrew Curto, Daniel Deegan. Standing: John Turanno, Judy Simoncic, Nina McCann, Peter Mineo.

Andrea Tsoukalas Honored by LI Business News

Long Island Business News

The first time Andrea Tsoukalas was featured in a newspaper article describing her career aspirations, she was in the first grade.

Tsoukalas' teacher had asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up and she proudly responded: "a policewoman."

Tsoukalas recalls her career choice was considered to be "funny," and nobody truly realized how serious she really was.

"I couldn't articulate at the time why I wanted to pursue that goal," said Tsoukalas, who is a partner at Forchelli, Curto, Deegan. Schwartz, Mineo, Cohn & Teranna in Uniondale. "Looking back now, I realized that I had always had a core sense of what is fair and just and I wanted to pursue a career where I would be in a position to help others."

Tsoukalas joined Forchelli Curto in 2005, concentrating her practice in zoning, land use, environmental, and municipal law matters. She represents a variety of clients including national corporate chains, local developers, and small business owners in the development of commercial and residential properties.

She recently obtained approvals for a 10,000 sq.-ft. expansion for Shelter Rock Church in the Town of Oyster Bay. She was also a major contributor in the completion of the Winston Project, a 285-unit luxury apartment building, for Polimeni International in Mineola.

Tsoukalas' accomplishments led the firm to name her a partner. "One of the proudest achievements in my career was being promoted partner in 2011," she said. "I was the youngest female attorney to achieve that status at our firm."

She has substantial experience in appellate practice and civil litigation. She litigates contract and real estate claims, corporate and partnership disputes, and zoning code violations.





Above: The Tsoukalases: Alexandros, Markella, and Andrea. Right: Andrea holds a citation presented by Nassau County legislator Richard Troiano. Andrea is a partner at law firm of Forchelli, Curto, Deegan, Schwartz, Mineo, Cohn & Terrana.

She's also general counsel to the Long Island Gasoline Retailers Association, a national nonprofit trade association and serves as counsel to the Village of Kensington's board of trustees, zoning board of appeals and architectural review board.

Tsoukalas strives to set a good example for her five year-old son, Paul, and appreciates the people who have helped her achieve her goals, especially her mother, Markella Tsoukalas, and her mentors, Peter Mineo and Andrew Curto.

Eleni Gage Authors First Novel: Other Waters

Continued from page 1

reviewer for Booklist wrote, "readers will be drawn into Gage's vivid evocation of the lively sights and sounds of India."

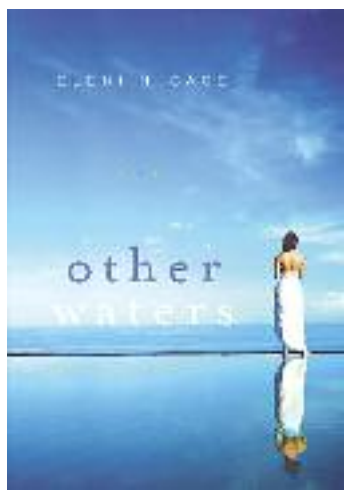
The new book is a natural extension <North of Ithaka>, which carried Gage into her own family's tragic past as the house she was rebuilding was not just her grandmother's home, but the place of execution. Her grandmother is the central figure in her father Nicholas Gage's classic story of revenge and redemption, <Eleni>.

In North of Ithaka, Gage "confronts her own family curse," and as she "rebuilds the ruins of her namesake's home… [She] comes to terms with her family's tragic history."

Although her roots are in the mountains of the Greek mainland, not the sea, Kirkus Reviews wrote that, "Gage beautifully describes the waters that evoke the transformative moments of Maya's journey….A lovely read."



Author Eleni Gage has followed her memoir North of Ithaka with her first novel, Other Waters.



Gage now lives in Miami Beach with her husband and their daughter, but she has spent her life moving back and forth between cultures and far-off places. She was raised in Athens, Greece and Worcester, MA. The release notes "Eleni has experienced firsthand the inherent tension of being bicultural, of developing competing identities, reconciling different world views, and balancing traditional beliefs with contemporary Western values."

The <Library Journal> writes that, "Gage makes a splendid fiction debut full of believable, fully developed characters and situations and set against exotic backgrounds. Readers who want to be swept away to far-off places will enjoy this book."

A graduate of Harvard University with a degree in Folklore and Mythology, Gage received an MFA in Creative Writing from Columbia University and writes regularly for <InStyle>, <Real Simple>, <Travel+Leisure>, and <Elle>, among other publications. Her work has also appeared in <The New York Times>, <Huffington Post>, <Martha Stewart Weddings>, <Town and Country>, <Reader's Digest>, <Parade>, <Slate>, <Self>, <More>, and <Redbook>.





In the Spotlight

If you'd like to nominate a notable member of the Greek American community for "In the Spotlight", please e-mail us at english.edition@thenationalherald.com with your suggestions.

GOINGS ON...

■ **FEBRUARY 18-19**
MANHATTAN – A new musical by Demetria Daniels, Holiday in Heaven, will be presented at the Roy Arias Theater, 300 West 43 Street in Manhattan of Tuesday, Feb. 14 at 7:30 PM, Saturday, Feb. 18 at 8:45 PM, and Sunday Feb. 19 at 4:15 PM. It is a romantic fantasy: what happens when Alexander the Great falls in love with an Earthling who has come to judge a harp contest in heaven in the year 3000. Tickets: SMARTTIX.COM. Go to "Search" and enter "Holiday in Heaven."

■ **FEBRUARY 24**
MANHATTAN – The Forum on Orthodox Spirituality (FOS) of the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity invite you to: Carnival, a Pre-Lenten Glendi on Friday, February 24, 2012 at 10:00 PM. Ammos Restaurant, 14 Vanderbilt Avenue (45th Street) across from Grand Central Station in Manhattan. www.ammosnewyork.com. There will be dancing with Live Greek Music & by Fantasia Music. Masks Optional but Preferred. Entrance Gratis, No RSVP Required. Guests who would like a table (there will be no FOS tables reserved) for dinner or drinks, please call Ammos in advance for reservations: 212-922-9999. www.thecathedralnyc.org.

■ **FEBRUARY 27**
MANHATTAN - Please join Honorary Patron, Ambassador of Greece Vassilis Kaskarelis, along with the Overseers and Friends of the Gennadius Library for the Clean Monday - Kathara Deftera Celebration, the 12th Annual Benefit for the Gennadius Library of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens to be held at Kellari Seafood Taverna, 19 West 44th St. in Manhattan on Monday, Feb. 27, 6:30PM. Traditional specialty dishes such as cuttlefish stewed in wine, rice pilaf with mussels, varieties of bean stews and salads, and squid stuffed with spinach and rice will be prepared by Executive Chef Gregory Zapantis. All proceeds support the library, a national treasure of Greece. Music provided by Gregory Maninakis and Mikrokosmos Ensemble. For more information visit www.gennadius.gr or contact J. Goble at 609-683-0800 ext. 14, or jgoble@ascsa.org.

■ **MARCH 2-3**
CHAMPAIGN, IL - 1st Champaign Greek Film Festival Organized by The program in Modern Greek Studies at the University of Illinois in collaboration with the FilmHellenes. Friday, March 2 & Saturday, March 3 at The Art Theater, 126 W Church St. in Champaign. 2012 Selected Films: The Guardian's Son, Plato's Academy, The Silent School,The Guide Withouth Borders, Gold Dust, Attenberg. All films will be presented in Greek with English subtitles. Platinum Sponsors: European Union Center, Silver Sponsors: Merry Ann's Diner, Pepsi Cola CU Bottling Company, Center for South Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, Office of International Programs and Studies; Bronze Sponsors: Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Russian, East European and Eurasian Center, FilmHellenes. Ticket prices: $9 (student: $7; senior: $6) Festival passes (all films, non-transferable): $25 (student: $20). To reserve your tickets or passes online, please send an email with your name and the number of tickets/passes you wish to reserve to modern-greek@illinois.edu. Festival passes may also be purchased from The Art Theater, Merry Ann's Diner, and Exile on Main.

■ **MARCH 3-24**
TARPON SPRINGS, FL – The City of Tarpon Springs' Center for Gulf Coast Folklife presents a series of workshops in Greek Orthodox Byzantine chanting by Protopsaltis Demetre Mott. The workshops are co-sponsored by St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, and are oriented toward those who are interested in chanting during Orthodox services. The first two workshops will examine the Byzantine musical system and its notation, which differs from the western system. The second lesson will include some basic song exercises. During the last two sessions students will learn basic melodies and hymns, and will hear some more complex pieces. The workshops take place on Saturdays from 11AM-12:30PM from March 3 through March 24 at the Center for Gulf Coast Folklife, at the Tarpon Springs Cultural Center, 101 S. Pinellas Ave in Tarpon Springs. Workshops are $5 each, payable at the time of the workshop. Call 942-5605 for more information.

■ **MARCH 10**
WASHINGTON, DC – On behalf of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) you are cordially invited to join us in celebrating our 37th Anniversary Hellenic Heritage Achievement and National Public Service Awards Dinner on Saturday, Mar. 10 at The Capital Hilton in Washington. CBS News correspondent Alexis Christoforous will be the Master of Ceremonies and the honorees will include: Kary Antholis, President, HBO Miniseries; E.J. "Mike" Elliot, Chairman, Gencor Industries, Inc.; Tom Korologos, former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium; Congresswoman Niki Tsongas; Sotiris J. Vahaviolos, Founder and CEO Mistras Group, Inc. The Silent Auction and Reception begin at 6:00 PM, Dinner is at 7:00 PM. Music by "Apollonia." Black tie. AHI has reserved a limited number of rooms at the Capital Hilton at the special rate of $149 per room per night. To reserve call 1-800 HILTONS and mention AHI or the 4 letter code AMHI. Additional special events: Friday, March 9 Dinner and VIP tour of U.S. Capitol. Space is limited. $150.00 per person. Saturday, March 10 Breakfast at Capitol Hilton, Alexis Christoforous, featured speaker. $30 per person. For additional information visit ahiworld.com or call 202-785-8430.

■ **MARCH 17**
Florence, SC - The Evrytanian Association of America Florence, SC Chapter No. 1 Panagia Prousiotissa request the pleasure of your company on Saturday, March 17 from 3-5PM for our Quarterly Hellenic Culture Lecture Series to take place at the Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation Library 509 South Dargen Street in Florence. Lecture topic: The Fight For Greek Independence 1821-1832. Lecture given by Dr. Chris Kennedy Ph.D. from Francis Marion University. Reception and refreshments following lecture. For more information, contact Jimmy Tassios at jbtassios@yahoo.com.

■ **MARCH 19**
MANHATTAN - The Cyprus Federation of American presents Vassilis Varvaresos in a Piano Recital Benefit Concert on Monday, March 19 at 7PM at the Zankel Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. For information call 201-444-8237 or 718-545-7202.

■ **APRIL 18**
MANHATTAN - The Hellenic American Bankers Association (HABA) will honor John A. Catsimatidis as its 2012 Executive of the Year on Wednesday, April 18, 2012 at the Union League Club of New York City. A cocktail reception from 6-7PM will precede the seated dinner at which Mr. Catsimatidis will be honored. Dignitaries will be in attendance as guests of honor. John Catsimatidis is the Chairman and Chief Executive Office of the Red Apple Group of New York. Red Apple Group has holdings in oil refining, wholesale and retail petroleum distribution, convenience stores, supermarkets, real estate, and aviation. For further information please call HABA at 212-421-1057 or visit www.HABA.org. Online booking is available through the HABA website.

■ **NOTE TO OUR READERS**
This calendar of events section is a complimentary service to the Greek American community. All parishes, organizations and institutions are encouraged to e-mail their information regarding the event 3-4 weeks ahead of time, and no later than Monday of the week before the event, to english.edition@thenationalherald.com

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Vote on our website!

You have the chance to express your opinion on our website on an important question in the news. The results will be published in our printed edition next week along with the question for that week.

The question this week is: Do you think all of Greece's MPs should follow President Papoulias' lead and not accept salaries?

❑ Yes
❑ No
❑ Maybe

The results for last week's question: Should Greece ban anyone from Paraliament who is over 50 or has already served 10 years?

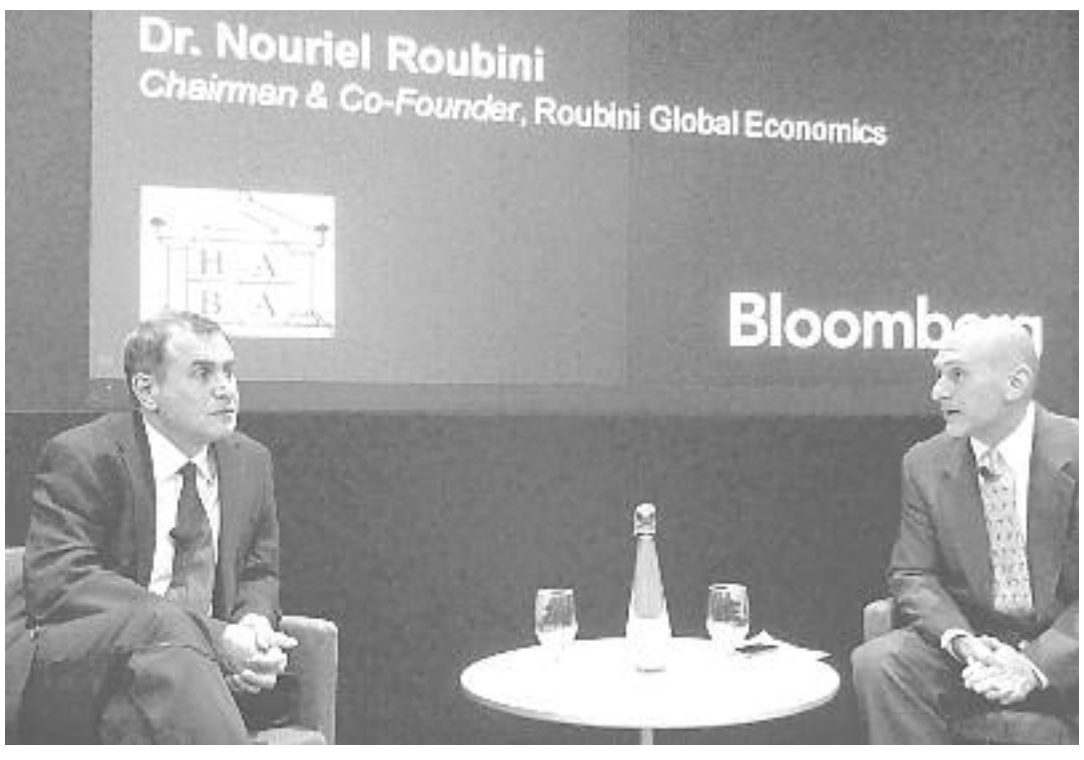
50% voted "Yes"
40% voted "No"
10% voted "Maybe"

Please vote at: www.thenationalherald.com

Wall Street Guru Roubini Remains Skeptical About Greece's Outcome

By Constantine S. Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer





Above: Nouriel Rouibini's "Greece and the Eurozone" presentation filled the auditorium at Bloomberg LP world headquarters in Manhattan. Right: During the Q&A Roubini (L) sat with the evening's host, Demetris Papacostas of Bloomberg LP, who is also a HABA director.

NEW YORK – Nouriel Roubini, a distinguished economist who gained renown by identifying the elements that led to the Great Recession of 2008 spoke on "Greece and the Eurozone: The Road-Map Ahead," at an event presented by the Hellenic American Bankers Association (HABA) in partnership with Bloomberg, LP, in Manhattan on February 9.

Unlike other statements he has made over the past year, Roubini did not declare Greece should default on its external debt, nor did he explicitly predict Greece would do so. However, he presented Argentina as an example of one of four paths Greece might take. Argentina, which defaulted and devalued its currency in 2002, generated strong export-driven growth that ended its own debt crisis.

Roubini, who teaches at New York University's Stern School of Business and is the co-founder and chairman of Roubini Global Economics, an economic consultancy firm, was christened "Dr. Doom" by the media for his frightening worst case scenarios, some of which became realities. He believes the current approach to the debt crisis is wrongly dominated by austerity measures and is not sufficiently focused on restoring growth to the Eurozone's troubled economies.

Demetris Papacostas, FX derivative product specialist at Bloomberg LP and a member of HABA's Board of Directors, was the evening's host at Bloomberg LP world headquarters. On behalf of Bloomberg and of HABA President Georgia Mouzakis Tavlarios, who was unable to be present, he welcomed the estimated 400 guests that overflowed the auditorium, many of whom observed on screens in satellite rooms. Papacostas moderated the Q & A that followed Roubini's presentation and he introduced HABA Vice President Costas Kellas, who called upon Katerina Alexandraki of Lazard Asset Management to the podium and who offered a warm introduction of Roubini.

Roubini said Europe's approach to date is "muddling through," which he pointed out "does not work with fundamental problems." For much of his presentation, Roubini chose to remain in the realm of the hypothetical.

After emphasizing that the main problem for the Eurozone - especially its peripheral states like Greece – is to regain competiveness, he listed four paths that could be taken, including policies that would reduce the value of the Euro itself – he says it would need to trade at parity with the U.S. Dollar – or the return of countries like Greece to their own national currencies, which he says would regain competitiveness from the resulting devaluation.

For the Eurozone to remain intact however, he bluntly declared that a more symmetrical policy is required. Although agreeing the so-called PIIGS – Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain – must undergo both austerity and structural reforms, they would take too long to yield results. He made it clear that the zone's "core states" especially Germany, must do their part.

Roubini said the current asymmetrical approach, stressing austerity and structural reforms in the periphery, will not work. Those must be balanced by stimulatory action by core countries, adding that Germany must accept "a slightly higher inflation rate" than they are now comfortable with. They prefer deflation in the periphery rather than inflation in the core," he said, but he added that Germany needs the Eurozone more than it lets on.

Born in Constantinople and raised in Italy, Roubini professed his love of Greece, which he has visited often – he will travel there in two weeks.

He disagrees with those who say Greece's export potential is insufficient for the net results of a return to the Drachma to be positive. He said that exports are a higher percentage of its GNP than was Argentina's when its crisis began, and added Greece would also benefit from substituting domestic goods for imports that would be more expensive after a devaluation. Some guests noted, however, that Argentina's manufacturing and agricultural sectors were larger and stronger than Greece's, and Papacostas pointed out that Argentina benefited from raw material exports. Others expressed concern the Greek state could not administer process.

Guests during Q&A wondered whether Greece must remain in the Eurozone for the sake of maintaining social stability, which would be necessary for the country to remain an attractive destination for tourists. Roubini disagreed, saying that it is the current path that would leave Greece mired in recession for a decade that risks violence and a social implosion.

He cited recent statistics indicating that the Greek GDP has fallen a total of 11 percent since 2008. Papacostas asked him if he believes the EU plan for Greece is to buy time for countries like Italy and Spain to stabilize enough to resist contagion from a Greek collapse and then wave "Auf Wiedersehen Griechenland."

Roubini replied that if those countries stabilize within 12-18 months, there would be two options: "you pull the plug [on Greece] and accept an orderly or disorderly default," or you make massive transfer payments from the core to put Greece on life support for many years. But he said politically that is impossible for the core, and Greece would still be in an untenable social situation for 10 years, so exit from the Euro is a viable alternative and would yield results in three or four years.

Whereas returning to the drachma would entail problems and pain – he referred to heavy "collateral damage," it would enable Greek growth to resume in a few years. "Lots of ugly stuff will happen but the alternative is five years of an ever-deepening depression."

Like Argentina, Greece would use tools such as capital and exchange rate controls. There will be a risk of runs on the banks, but he said devaluation can be managed to avoid hyperinflation. He followed up by telling TNH the core countries will still have to provide financial support during the transition.

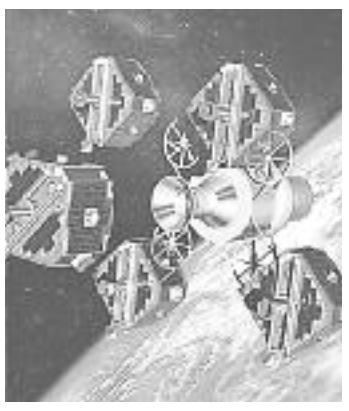
He responded to a question about the feasibility and value of creating a Northern and Southern euro by saying that in practice that won't happen. "It's never happened in a currency union," and the problems will cause states to say "I might as well go back to my lira or peseta," – or the drachma.

sirigos@thenationalherald.com

Vassilis Angelopoulos Studies the Innumerable Wonders of the Universe

By Constantine S. Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer





Space plasma physicist Vassilis Angelopoulos, and a rendering of two of the THEMIS project satellites in Earth orbit.

NEW YORK – Greek-American scientist Vassilis Angelopoulos, PhD, a space plasma physicist at UCLA, led a team of scientists that has made major contributions to understanding geomagnetic storms triggered by violent eruptions on the sun. The storms are capable of damaging vital satellites and other orbiting spacecraft, and Angelopoulos creates intellectual models that describe how nature works, enabling them to make predictions, such as the familiar forecasts for the 'airy' atmosphere. The weather in space involves plasma, charged particles like electron that respond strongly to electromagnetic fields.

The space weather that most affects the Earth occurs in the aptly-named Magnetosphere, but the main feature of space weather is called the solar wind. It normally blows from the sun at 300 km. per second, but in a storm the speed can reach up to 700 k.p.s., heating up electrons in the magnetosphere to dangerous levels.

The better the model of the magnetosphere, the more accurate, and most importantly, the more timely the forecasts. With such warnings, engineers can command the satellites to turn off their vital systems – shielding will never be enough – to protect themselves from high energy electrons. They are known as killer elections because they can even kill astronauts if they are unprotected.

Angelopoulos' team looked at a part of the earth's magnetosphere called the outer Van Allen radiation belt in order to resolve a puzzle that stood in the way of a better model. They needed to understand the disappearance and apparent return of the dangerous high energy elections blasted away when the solar wind's strength increases during storms. It turns out they don't return but are generated anew to replenish the lost supply.

Because they needed to look at two competing models impartially, Angelopoulos, the principal investigator of the mission, named the network of NASA spacecraft "THEMIS (Time History of Events and Macroscale Interactions during Substorms) after the Greek goddess of justice.

Angelopoulos was graduated from the Physics Department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He obtained his PhD in Physics from UCLA. He grew up in Thessaloniki, where his father Euripides lives. His mother's side has deep Macedonian roots, while his father's family migrated from the Peloponnese to the North, as part of their efforts fighting the Turks even before the revolution of 1821. His father worked for the famous Thessaloniki Fair and his mother was a seamstress. Both had a strong conviction that their children should undertake higher education.

Angelopoulos' sister Christina is a distinguished piano teacher. Feeding the link between scientists and music in the popular mind, his own degrees include one in violin studies. He and his sister played together all the time. His humble parents fostered a love of music that was a significant part of his upbringing and he is trying to do the same with his children. His son plays guitar and his daughter excels in piano and voice, but both are good math students, hinting more strongly at a path to the sciences. His wife Mary teaches at Occidental College – she has Cretan roots and they met as students at UCLA.

Angelopoulos appreciates the teachers and mentors with whom he was blessed. In high school he had an outstanding tutor whom he said influenced his thinking and his drive, fostering his inquisitiveness and critical thinking. His excellent professors at the University of Thessaloniki strongly influenced him in pursuing Plasma physics.

In Greece, his opportunities for higher studies were limited, so he had to look both for schools and ways to finance his studies without putting a strain on his family. "The U.S. is excellent at giving people opportunities and enabling them to do many things, and back then it was doing it much better than now," he said. He obtained a Fulbright scholarship which opened doors for him at many universities.

Later on he met the dean of space plasma physics, noted Greek-American scientist Dr. Stamatis Krimigis, who he called a "pillar and inspiration for me. He mentored me when I had doubts about which way to proceed. He is such a leader in the field and is so highly regard because he helped shape the field of space physics."

FUTURE OF SCIENCE IN GREECE

After acknowledging the success of so many Greek scientists around the world, Angelopoulos spoke of the extremely difficult position Greece now finds itself in.

"The country is struggling to survive… but at the same time it should not eat its seed corn," using a metaphor for failing to invest in the future. "It should not deprive the youth of the opportunities to stay and do well."

Regarding the tough decisions Greece must make, he declared that "we Greeks must think seriously about what we will sacrifice in order to make possible a future where we are not just the servants of the Europeans. There are many assets in Greece but we must make choices about what we give up." He agrees the government is not good accepting trades off and making the touch decisions. "Because emotion is involved," he said.

He believes however, that Greek-Americans can help, including the area of Greek higher education, "in ways that do not even involve money, but rather time and experience. The diaspora can be extremely instrumental in reshaping Greece."

Angelopoulos himself is a very resourceful Greek. He is now using the THEMIS satellites for a different mission. Repositioning two of them around the moon instead of the earth – these are now named, appropriately, Artemis - they study the moon's radiation environment, and its inner core.

Angelopoulos has a way to go to catch up to his mentor, Dr. Krimigis. "He is the only scientist who has an instrument on every single planet in the solar system," he said, including the recently-demoted Pluto.

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New Leadership 100 Chair Charles Cotros Shares his Vision with TNH

Continued from page 1

ple." Cotros said that "we tried to meet the expectations of all our members. We honored the Greek soldiers who fought in the different wars, and we had a presentation about the Parthenon." Cotros called Dow Chemical's CEO Andrew Viveri's presentation "truly spectacular," and also said that Nichole Petallides from Fox News "did an excellent job."

Cotros added that "there was some serious work done" and explained "we were able to approve some grants that were submitted by the archbishop and the Archdiocese because basically our mission is to support the ministries of the Archdiocese. Because of the last few years that the stock market has been negative and our endowment has been very low, we have not been able to do as much as we would like to do in terms of grants, but at this Conference we approved 475,000 worth of grants in addition to the million dollars we give to the School of Theology, so basically we can say that we approved one and one half million in grants this year."

Speaking about his election as Chairman of the Leadership 100, he said "I am very honored, I was Vice Chairman of the Organization for two years when Costas Carras was Chairman, I am on the executive board for a number of years so I am excited about the opportunity and I look forward to work with the other members of the Board and the membership to continue the things that we were set up to do which basically is to get new members, raise money, and support the ministries of our Church."

Leadership currently has 875 members - "if we achieve 1,000 it's going to be a great accomplishment."

Cotros said "the organization has done a lot of great work, we have given over thirty million dollars to miniseries we are going to continue to do that, I think we need to continue to bring in new members, to continue to expand the scope for the things we support, the needs of our people are great right now."

Regarding Leadership's total assets, he said "obviously the endowment is basically dictated by the investments that we have and that goes up and down every day, but through the week of the Conference we upheld approximately 72 or 73 million dollars."

Cotros said "our organization is one that can really help our Church. You've got AHEPA, which is a great organization, Philoptochos, the Faith; all are here to support our Church. We have a great heritage and we should very-very proud of and the only way we can help promote the needs of our Church, which are great."

Cotros added that the Greek crisis was not brought up "officially" at the Conference. A TNH reader, Cotros said "there is so much hardship over there" and



Charles Cotros, newly-elected Chairman of the Leadership 100, with his wife Connie during the philanthropic organization's 21st annual Conference last week in Manalapan, FL.

he added "in fact, I was there during some of the riots when Papandreou was still the prime minister. We were staying at the Grand Bretagne Hotel and they came and damaged the Hotel and closed down the King George Hotel next door."

Cotros exclaimed great pride for his Greek-American identity, and added "Greece brought civilization to the world" and "I thing we all should very proud of our heritage and that is why it makes me feel so bad because of what is happening in Greece today. I think a lot of this could have been avoided if it hadn't been for people for not doing the right thing…I was very proud when Greece hosted the Olympics. People need to understand that Greece is half the size on New York City population-wise, yet they put on the most spectacular Olympics ever."

A frequent visitor to Greece, Cotros said "I asked [my wife] what she wanted for a birthday and she said I want to take my whole family to Greece, I want my grandchildren to see where there grand parents came form so 19 of us 11 grandchildren and our 3 children went to Greece for two and a half weeks."

Greece's Ambassador to the US, Vassilis Kaskarelis, Interviewed on PBS

Continued from page 1

people ready for that?

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: The people, I believe that they have digested already the fact that things have to change in Greece. And this is why, since we started these reforms in early 2010, and for the past two years, we have had, of course, some demonstrations in Greece, but most of them were peaceful and most of them were limited in size.

JEFFREY BROWN: Now, at the same time, of course, you have European finance ministers already suggesting that even these measures may not be enough and using some rather tough talk about Greece as a -- quote -- "bottomless pit."

You had the German finance minister, Schaeuble, saying, "Greek promises aren't enough for us anymore.'

Are their demands valid, or does this begin to feel like the more you give, the more they keep asking for?

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: For the past two years, I'm reading on a daily basis statements from every minister of finance or every novelist or analysts all over the globe mentioning Greece and recommending what Greece has



Amb. Kaskarelis told the NewsHour most of the Greek demonstrations have been peaceful, and "the people…have digested the fact that things have to change in Greece."

to do.

You have always to keep at the back of the mind when you listen to these statements that they also have the public opinion back home. They have to explain why they are giving this money to Greece, why they spend taxpayers' money.

And, at this point, I would like to clarify that the money that we receive from our partners in Brussels and from the IMF is not free money. It's not a bailout, as people used to call it. It's a loan. And it's a loan with a very high interest rate, actually higher than the rate that you can obtain in the market.

JEFFREY BROWN: But you talk about public opinion. Are you concerned about the level? Because you have strong resentment in Northern Europe, bailing out -- what is seen as a bailout -- of a profligate Greece. You have resentments now in Greece that we see daily about Germany and others sort of dictating to your government. It's getting rather ugly.

And I wonder if you're concerned about whether this can be healed.

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: Actually, I believe it can be healed. It's a reaction that it was expected.

When you ask to people, to everyday people, ordinary people to change completely their lives, their planning, their family planning, and this in a matter of several months, but in a very short period of time, it's something to expect that you have some reactions.

But the vast majority of Greek people have fully digested and understand the fact that we have to change. We have to change not the salaries or our way of life, but we have to change the structure of the state. We have to limit the government. We have to privatize state enterprises. We cannot go on like this.

JEFFREY BROWN: There are still many that fear, that think that even these measures and even this new money may not be enough, that there is still the possibility of a default by Greece. Does your government think this is still a possibility?

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: I don't believe so.

And I don't believe so because the money that we received from the European Union and the IMF is quite enough to overcome the crisis. The point is if we will be able to implement the -- all the measures that we have adopted and we adopted yesterday, I mean, with the new austerity measures package. And I believe that all political parties in Greece, I mean, major political parties in Greece, are ready to deliver.

JEFFREY BROWN: You think so?

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: I think so.

JEFFREY BROWN: And, tomorrow, of course, you have European finance ministers.

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: Actually, on Wednesday.

JEFFREY BROWN: On Wednesday. I'm sorry.

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: Yes, the Eurogroup. We have the Eurogroup in Brussels. And the Eurogroup will decide for the new loan to Greece, for granting the new loan to Greece.

JEFFREY BROWN: All right, Ambassador Vassilis Kaskarelis, thank you very much.

VASSILIS KASKARELIS: Thank you very much.

Constantine Constantinides' Evocative Music Triumphs at Carnegie Hall

Continued from page 1

The conclusion was announced by a single, peaceful strike of a bell.

"Patterns for Violin and Piano" opened with driving passages on the Steinway by Michael Gurt, followed by Yova Milanova's passionate violin. There was a dialogue between the two, maybe an argument. Though it seemed that the violin and piano were talking over and past one another, they did appear to pay attention to what the other was saying, an argument not in a new relationship but of a mature marriage perhaps. They know everything will be resolved, but only after each has said his peace.

The musical contrasts suggest the misunderstanding persists, but some passages signal much has been learned about the other and his pain and needs. The next section of the piece confirms it as there is now genuine though still-agitated communication between Mr. Piano and Ms. Violin. Finally, there is a shift to passionate pleading with each other to just understand.

"Solo Saxophone for Celestial Musings" suggests a more abstract theme, but the human element is there. The beginning was evocative more of birds in flight than the stars and planets careening above them. With the passing of the birds, the audience, having accepted the idea that a single solo instrument can evoke a multitude, experiences a dialogue, but one different from the disputatiousness of the preceding piece.

There is a discussion among the heavenly citizens, or rather, one of the saxophone's personas, a human, questions them: what does it all mean? What will happen? The saxophone was polite but insistent, despite skepticism that gazing up at the skies could reveal something of his fate, but Constantinides' music makes it plausible.

Quickly, however, as the sax became more energetic and agitated, an annoyed heaven seems to respond. The message, buried in the natural repetitiveness of music, seems to be a very Russian: "You have seen it all before, why do you expect it to come out differently this time? Yes there will be hurricanes and earthquakes, depressions and revolutions, drama and boredom below as above." But the penultimate outburst of the sax betrayed the human hope that it will be different next time, and in the end, even the planets seemed more sympathetic.

The first half of the concert closed with the delightful "Percussion Quartet." With vibes and marimba, the percussion is not mere banging, so harmonies and melodies are never overwhelmed. The snare drums and their booming brothers hammered out a martial strain that the others followed, though a bit reluctantly. The second movement began with a peaceful gong and more placid drums, the vibes commenting occasionally. Soon, there were chimes, suggesting peace, but the drum beats a quiet but definitely martial message. Some sudden outbursts remind listeners that the warriors are not quieter or calmer, just at a distance.

The third movement was more playful, even childlike, but the martial elements remained, making one wonder: How young are human beings when they start to think of conflict and conquest? At one point the marimba and vibes begin dueling, egged on by the two drummers. Hamiruge's members are Brett William, Dietz Chris Hoefer, Daniel Heagney and Samuel Trevathan.

After the intermission, "Suite for a Young Man for Solo Piano" began turbulently, but not violently. There was a quiet period followed by a more lyrical and playful section, which alternated with more turbulence, hinting more at adolescence than young adulthood.

A jazzy interlude followed, perhaps a resolution of the earlier conflicts, and some Hellenic melodies seemed to be present as well. All adolescents should find their way to some Mediterranean calm, but then there were some emotional uprisings – the Aegean can also be stormy after all. On the beach, anger returns, thought toned down, and soon yields to a romantic turn, not quite sexual, the spiritual eros of Liszt and the civilized romance of Chopin come to mind, but sex is never far from such musical or personal moments. The music then takes a modern turn, hinting at what Freud might have to say about all of this, before ending with a bang.



Costas Constantinides, a distinguished violinist born in Ioannina, did not compose full time until he was 35 years old.



Eight of Costas Constantinides' compositions were performed at the Weil Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall on February 12.

Northern California Federation Postpones Parade

By Theodore Kalmoukos
TNH Staff Writer

San Francisco, CA –The Federation of Greek associations and societies of Northern California has decided to postpone this year's Greek Independence Day Parade scheduled for March 25, because of the economic situation in Greece. Instead, the Federation will organize ceremonies in the auditorium of the City Hall of San Francisco.

Federation President Theodoros Laliotis told TNH that "the members of the Board decided unanimously to go on with the ceremonies but to postpone the parade for this year, because of the economic and political situation in Greece."

He explained that "our Federation feels that it is not right for us to march in the streets and in the squares of San Francisco when hundreds of thousands families in Greece are suffering from unemployment,



Federation President Theodoros Laliotis told TNH the money they would have spent on the parade will used to help Greece.

hungriness and homelessness and when the International Media is full of photos from a burning Athens from the anarchists."

Laliotis also said that "instead of spending thousands of dollars to do the parade we are going to the money to those who suddenly found themselves on the streets, homeless, and they feed their children from the soup kitchens of the Church and Army."

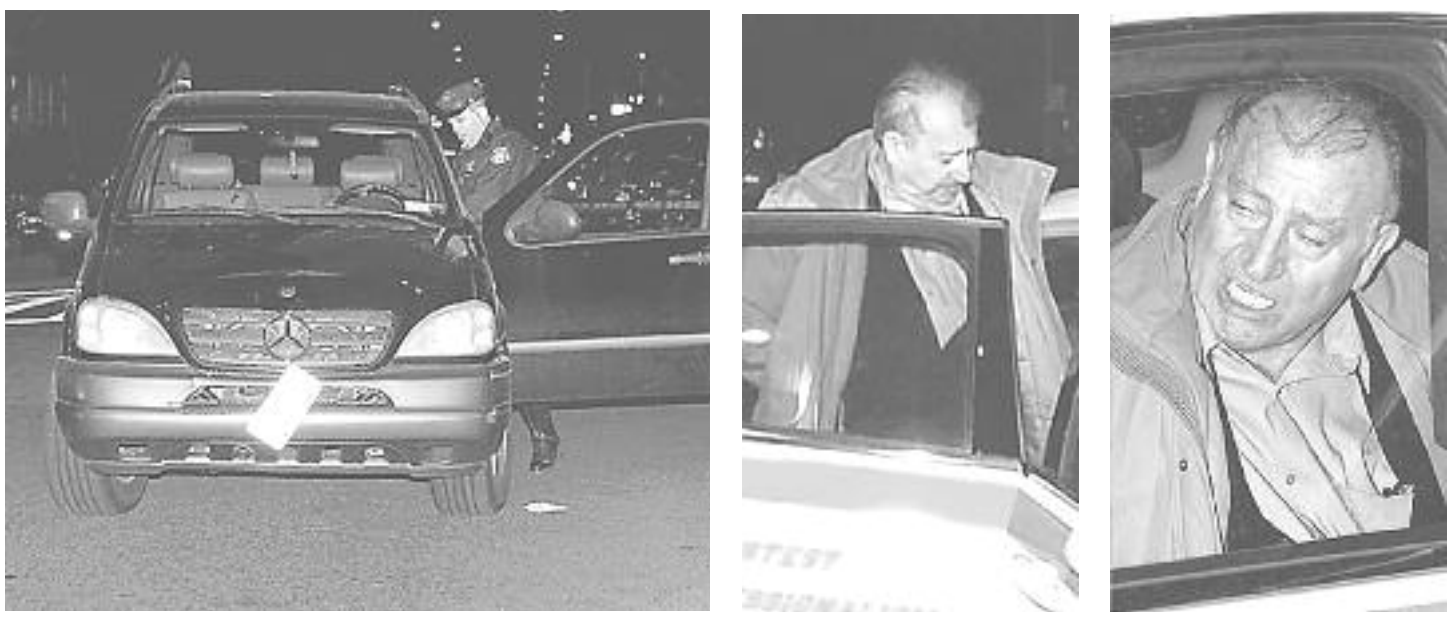
He said the parade usually costs around $30,000; that amount, minus the cost for the City Hall ceremonies, will be sent to help the needy in Greece.

"As we did in 2007 with the fire relief efforts that we went personally to Greece and distribute the monies to those in need we are going to do the same thing now as well."

He added that "we may cooperate with the Church of Greece, which has established mechanisms for food distribution and hot meals."

Astoria Motorist is Charged with DWI and Vehicular Manslaughter

By Demetrios Tsakas and Constantine S. Sirigos



Demitrios Matsoukatidis entering police car. He was charged with one count of vehicular manslaughter and two counts of DWI.

ASTORIA – Demitrios Matsoukatidis of Astoria has been charged with one count of vehicular manslaughter and two counts of DWI after allegedly striking 89-year old Lizardo Aldama with his 2007 Mercedes SUV in the crosswalk at 21st Avenue near 31st Street in Astoria on February 8.

Matsoukatidis was arraigned the following day before Queens Criminal Court Judge John Zoll. After hearing the sworn testimony of Detective Kevin Stokert, Zol indicted Matsoukatidis under Vasean's Law and ordered him to be detained on a $50,000 bond and scheduled him to return to the same court on February 28. He faces up to seven years in prison if convicted.

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown said "the defendant is accused of getting behind the wheel while under the influence of alcohol and being involved in a traffic accident in which a pedestrian was struck and killed. By his alleged actions, the defendant illustrated the lethal consequences resulting from driving while intoxicated."

Stoeckert presented the details during his testimony and said the "defendant admitted that he was the driver of the black 1998 Mercedes and that he had a green light" when he crossed the intersection. He added that he observed the defendant to be "in an intoxicated condition in that he observed the defendant to have a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage on his breath, bloodshot watery eyes, slurred speech, and was unsteady on his feet."

Stoeckert further testified that he was informed by police officer Colucci of the 114th precinct "that he removed the defendant to the 112th precinct and was present when an intoxilyzer exam was administered to the defendant and that the results of said intoxilyzer exam indicated that the defendant had a .16 of one percentum or more by weight of alcohol in his blood." That was above the New York State legal limit of .08 percent.

The police report states that "the victim suffered severe head trauma and was removed to a local Queens hospital where he was pronounced dead by Dr. Jamehdor at 6:47 PM.

Attorney Dennis Kopin, who has 20 years experience in criminal law, will represent the defendant. A New York Police Department spokesman told TNH that Matsoukatidis has no criminal record and that his is the first time he was arrested and charged with driving under influence of alcohol.

George Alexiou, president of the Greek-American Home Owners Association, noted that "acquaintances and friends were shocked by the incident." He emphasized that "all those who had contact with him had the best things to say about him, that he was a good family man and had very good character."

TNH efforts to communicate with his family, including his brother, were in vain.

Likewise, TNH has not been able to confirm that Matsoukatidis has been released.

The NYPD spokesman and other TNH sources said that he remained at the scene of the accident and tried to help the victim, contrary to <Daily News> reports that "the driver tried to flee the scene, witnesses said, but was stopped by a flock of good Samaritans along the busy commercial strip." The <News> added that "'a lot of people who saw it came and stopped the car,' said Margarita Vinchay, 38, who works at a laundromat near the scene. 'He was driving crazy,'" and that "witnesses then whipped out their cell phones and called 911."

The fatal incident happened in front of the restaurant Family Corner Restaurant and owner Spyros Kavadias was among the first who ran to see what happened. He told the <Daily News> "I just heard a Boom! and people screaming…I came out and see a man lying down in the street," he said. "his shoes were in the middle of the street - he wasn't moving."

Kavadias told TNH, "once I heard the bang and went out in a split second police, fire and ambulances came. Many people gathered there and it was difficult to have a clear picture. I did not the slightest chance to talk to him, he said of the driver of the car." TNH asked Kavadias, who is from the island of Lefkada, whether he knew Matsoukatidis, but he said he was not a customer and that they had not met before.

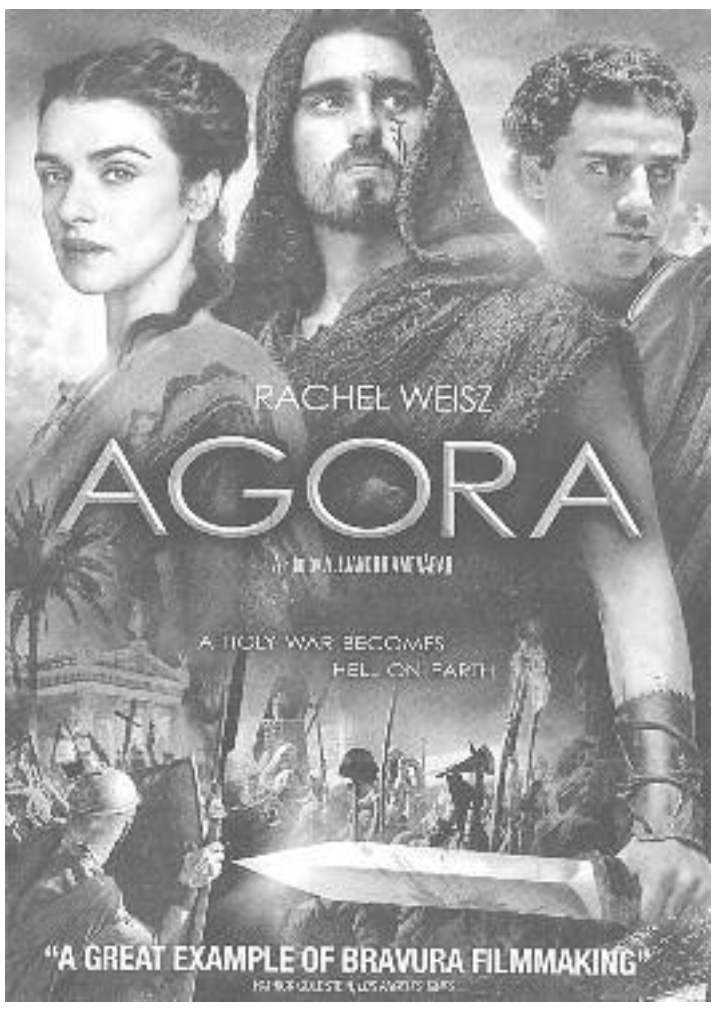
The victim was identified as a Cuban refugee who came to Astoria in 1961. DNAInfo.com quoted James Foertsch, Aldama's son-in-law: "It's terrible. He had plenty more life to live, and it was tragically cut short by a drunk driver…He was an immigrant from Cuba that came here with nothing, and he built a wonderful family."

Aldama was said to have been planning a trip to Tampa, FL to visit his son and that he regularly his daughter, Maite Aldama-Foertsch and his teenage grandson in Long Island. DNAInfo.com noted that "After his wife died a few years ago, Aldama spent his days going to 31st Street for mass at the Immaculate Conception Parish, where he was a member of the Knights of Columbus." Havana Express owner Lopez said the men were on the last ship to leave Cuba in 1959 and traveled to Spain together. They came to New York separately and reunited when Lopez randomly checked out an apartment in a building in Astoria, and found Aldama already living on the first floor.

ALL HISTORY

Agora: One of the Finest Films Ever about the Greeks of the Roman Era

By Steve Frangos



The murder of Hypatia, more a distinguished math teacher than a brilliant mathematician, is for many a symbol of the decline of classical learning after the rise of Christianity.

Released in the United States just a little over a year ago, the motion picture epic <Agora> is without question one of the finest films ever made about Greeks and Greek culture of the Roman Era. How this superb film slipped by the general American viewing audience is a complete mystery.

In the well-established tradition of a major motion picture albeit one that has somehow escaped widespread attention, critics and reviewers continue to praise the film. Typical of the critical accolades the film continues to receive, Patrick Goldstein writing in the <Los Angeles Times> asserts that <Agora> is "a great example of bravura filmmaking," and he is absolutely right.

The film stars Rachel Weisz, the English actress, in the role of Hypatia; it was co-written and directed by Alejandro Amen bar. Produced with an international crew, <Agora> continues to receive all sorts of attention for both dramatic content and its stunning production quality. Now available on DVD, this epic film is well-served (dare it be said, enhanced) by the accompanying <Journey to Alexandria> documentary that offers us an inside view of how the film was made.

While it is true that one would be hard-pressed to find any serious film whose action takes place during the late Classical era, those that do exist are of the tawdriest Hercules/sword and sandal variety imaginable. On the other hand, <Agora> can be compared favorably with the best films one can name that present Greek society and culture of the distant past in terms of dramatic content, sheer beauty, and overall accuracy of historical presentation. Adding to this film's singular allure is that it is also deals quite successfully with offering – in an entertaining and understandable manner – the core scientific questions that Hypatia dealt with during her life.

HYPATIA OF ALEXANDRIA

The dramatic action of this movie takes place in Alexandria in 391 AD. Hypatia's daily round of activities teaching, conducting research, and simply living in the great city of Alexandria form the body of the film's action. All this may not sound like the makings of high drama, but that is where this film begins as it explores the politics, religious fervor, and career of one of the world's most renowned philosophers.

For those asleep that day in Greek school, Hypatia was head of the Neo-Platonist school at Alexandria, where she taught philosophy, astronomy, mechanics, and mathematics. She was the daughter of Theon Alexandricus (ca. 335-405) who was the last librarian of the Library of Alexandria (in the Museum of Alexandria) . The Library of Alexandria was the greatest single repository of knowledge in the Ancient world.

Hypatia was educated in Athens and Italy and around 400 AD she became the head of the Neo-Platonist school of philosophy in Alexandria.

Scholars widely agree that Theon worked on Euclid's Geometry, but few attest to the amount or kind of contributions Hypatia may have provided her father with that volume. Yet it was the study of Euclid's work – regarding logical reasoning as well as mathematics – that attributed to the Western European scholars' emergence from the Dark Ages.

While Hypatia's impact on Western thought has been considerable, it is based on very little written documentation. The total sum of real information on Hypatia comes from surviving correspondence between Hypatia and one of her students, Synesius of Cyrene, who became bishop of Ptolemais in 410 AD and references by pagan philosopher Damascius, another of her students. That is virtually all that now constitutes what is reliably known of Hypatia's life. Her students came from all over the Western world and so were a mixture of pagans, Christians, and Jews.

Awareness of Hypatia never faded from Western thought. In Raphael's, original draft of The School at Athens, fresco Hypatia was in the center, just below Aristotle and Plato. Commissioned by Pope Julius II, that fresco was just above the philosophical section of the Pope's personal library. As we shall see, old feelings die hard and the Church fathers ordered her removal. Nonetheless, Raphael did manage to place Hypatia in the lower left of the fresco – as the only figure who directly gazes out at the viewers.

HYPATIA ON FILM

As depicted in <Agora>, the cinematic tale of Hypatia of Alexandria's life is a complex presentation worthy of its subject. Hypatia lived at a time when Alexandria was the intellectual center of the Western world. And the conflicts of that time period are also shown in Alexandrian daily life. Portraying Hypatia, Weisz is shown teaching her pupils, working with her father on scientific questions, attending the theater, interacting with the ruling class of the city, striving to solve astronomical issues, and simply walking through the markets.

In its broadest strokes, the film's dramatic core follows the events of Hypatia's life as it is generally understood. Hypatia was close friends with Orestes, the secular governor of Alexandria and as we see in the film she spoke with and was listened to by him and all the city's ruling class of men as an equal. In 412 AD, Cyril became the patriarch of Alexandria and attempted to seize power away from Orestes. Hypatia was caught in the middle of that political struggle as both a woman who did not act as Cyril and the Christian men believed a woman ought to act, and as a Hellene philosopher. As events develop, Hypatia is pressed to become a Christian. Speaking to Bishop Synesius, in answer to his request to become a Christian, "you cannot question what you believe, I must!"

In 415 or 416 AD, a Christian mob tortured and killed Hypatia. Orestes quickly disappeared and Bishop Cyril, through bribes to the emperor, became the ruler of Alexandria. Most remaining non-Christian scholars fled Alexandria for Athens. Various modern historians assert that Hypatia's murder marked the end of Classical antiquity, the first age of Reason, and so ushered in for Western Europe that period of their history known as the Dark Ages. Following this last line of thought another example of the process now known as the "assault on Hellenism," that every thinking Modern Hellene should be aware of, is that the notion that it was primarily Arab translations of Greek texts brought Western Europe out of the Dark Ages – which is completely false. This idea ignores the important transmission of the knowledge of Antiquity into Europe through Byzantium.

The key to understanding the nature of this film is that woven throughout this story is Hypatia's everyday life as teacher, scientific research partner with her father, and later on her own ongoing independent scientific discoveries. Hard as it may be to believe, without seeing the film itself, the presentation of Hypatia investigating – the heliocentric model of the solar system as first proposed by Aristarchus of Samos as well as anticipating the elliptical orbits discovered by Johannes Kepler 1200 years after her death – are offered in compelling fashion not unlike a detective tale where the viewer is caught up in working the evidence out along with the main character of the movie.

On the DVD the accompanying documentary, <Journey to Alexandria: The Origin of Agora> is itself an especially fine mini-film all onto itself. This accompaniment not only offers insights into the day-to-day production process of film making, but it is steeped in historical details that infuse the entire film. The director and others offer their explanations for the choices they made concerning Hypatia's life, the conditions at the Library at Alexandria, the daily interactions between Hellenes, Christians, and Jews in Alexandria.

It is a particular treat for Greeks to watch this film, as the daily lives and scientific work of not only Hellenistic Greeks but also the newly-recognized Christian faith are depicted. The combination of individual stories with human history is not always pretty. The tensions and chaos of that age are fully realized on the screen. There will be times when one may look away from the screen when shown the reality of slavery among the Greeks and more than one moment when audiences will be stunned by the stupidity and inhumanity of the Christians. The documentary further notes, but only in passing, that there were other Greek women who were educated and of Hypatia's social class but unaccountably we hear no more about them.

An especially noteworthy aspect of this film's production is the use of the Fayum Portraits as guides to facial types, hairstyles, costuming, and jewelry. The Fayum Portraits are those naturalistic paintings attached to the mummies found across Egypt from the late 1st Century BC onward.

Hypatia of Alexandria is one of the many Hellenic Greeks that every Modern Greek should read about at least once. This fine film depicts Hypatia much as she must have been – one of those individuals who looked up at the stars and asked the most fundamental of all questions: "what's going on here?"

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Gage Examines Shipowners' Role to aid Crisis by Investing

Continued from page 1

about their country's nuclear research program.

The burning question is, will the shipowners, by far the wealthiest sector of the Greek people, make the sort of financial investment at home that could save their country? The answer has not been forthcoming. For almost two years now the Union of Greek Shipowners has urged its members to avoid talking to the press at all. When a Greek shipowner does open up, as Thanasis Laskaridis did with me (he owns 58 ships with his brother Panos), it can be seen as an act of personal rebellion. "I'm going to be 60 next year," Laskaridis says, "and I'm not going to watch what's going on in this country and keep silent."

Most Greek tycoons, however, are following the union's advice to keep their opinions to themselves. The vow of silence certainly suits their needs. At a time when the desperate Greek populace is rioting almost daily to protest severe austerity measures, any confession of a sumptuous lifestyle by the Golden Greeks could cause them serious trouble.

The dangers of flaunting wealth in public were illustrated in June 2010 when Leon Patitsas, a scion of the Lemos shipping dynasty, decided to celebrate his wedding to a former Miss Greece with a lavish party in Piraeus, the world's third-largest passenger port, some 12 miles outside Athens, on a historic battleship belonging to the



Athenians strike against austerity measures imposed by the government and the International Monetary Fund, Dec. 2011.

Greek navy. Greek shipowners from all over had gathered in Piraeus for the biennial trade fair called Posidonia, so the young British-born Patitsas invited them on board. There was champagne and lobster, sushi and caviar, and to his lasting embarrassment, there was also a gatecrasher who worked for a Greek tabloid. The next day its pages were filled with photos of the opulent party, with descriptions of some of the women present as "party girls" and "ex-Playmates." Soon the then-minister of national defense, Evangelos Venizelos, issued a statement calling the event "heavily insulting" to the Greek navy and to "the patriotic sensitivity" of the Greek people.

All the commotion incensed the average Greek, who is easily incensed these days. Only a few weeks earlier, Greek television had broadcast nonstop images of the May 5 riots in Athens, when more than 100,000 people gathered in Constitution Square to protest the austerity measures and tried to storm Parliament. Throwing chunks of marble torn from the steps of nearby hotels, Molotov cocktails, and broken bottles, they battled police armed with tear gas and clubs. Some of the rioters bombed a bank branch not far away, killing three bank employees, including a pregnant woman.

The photographs of the Patitsas party were a stark contrast to the plight of ordinary Greeks, who had suffered severe reductions in salaries

and pensions under austerity measures imposed by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. Patitsas eventually made a public apology, but powerful shipowners were furious that they were

being treated as scapegoats.

No wonder the Union of Greek Shipowners passed the word: no more talking to the press, no more photos of luxurious parties, and 'om now on keep your wealthy lifestyle out of the public eye.

The union, however, does talk frequently with government officials, according to the man charged with overseeing the shipping industry for

the Greek government, Michalis Chrisohoidis, the minister of development, competitiveness, and shipping. The intense, square-jawed 56-year old lawyer won recognition earlier in the decade as the minister of public

order who led the capture of Greece's most violent terrorist group, November 17, which had operated for 30 years without a single arrest.

> Throughout their lives, Onassis and Niarchos competed for women, real estate... yachts... and private islands...

During our interview a few months ago, amid the Old World elegance of the Grande Bretagne Hotel's Winter Garden, in Athens, I asked Chrisohoidis how willing shipowners were to make investments in Greece and to spur development. He took a sip from his espresso, and his brow furrowed. "Here is what I want to say," he finally began. "We, as a government and as a nation, share a common goal with our shipowners: to keep Greek shipping number one in the world, because each year it contributes between $15 billion and $18 billion to our economy."

Pressed for a more direct answer—were they willing to help?—he left room for doubt about the shipowners' commitment. "We are hopeful that they'll be motivated to play a major role in helping Greece, now that the economic future of our people is at stake, as Greek shipowners in the past have always done at critical times for our nation."

The legacy of their heroic forebears is a formidable one, and it poses both a challenge and a burden to today's tycoons, who are expected by many to be as magnanimous as their predecessors. The history of such selflessness dates from 1821 when Greece struggled to free itself from 400 years of Ottoman rule in the country's War for Independence.

At the start of that revolt, the Greek shipping communities on the Aegean islands, which did a brisk business carrying goods between the Ottoman Empire and Europe, had just over 300 armed merchant vessels, employing 12,000 sailors. The shipowners contributed their ships and their fortunes to the war effort, converting many of their vessels into fire ships (bourlotes), to be set ablaze and steered into the midst of Ottoman convoys.

One of the most colorful of those shipowners was Laskarina Bouboulina, the 50-year-old widow of a sea captain. During the eight year war (1821-29) she commanded eight ships, participated in many battles, and was ultimately awarded the rank of admiral. Today a statue of the war heroine reigns over the harbor in Spetses.

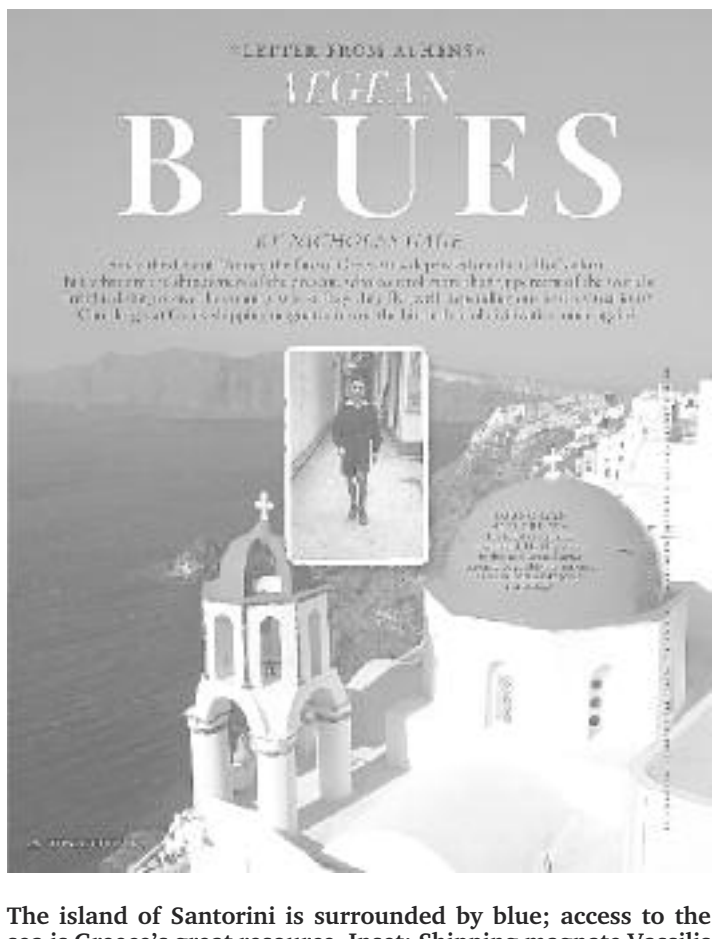
During World War II, the Greek shipowners once again came to the aid of their country, turning over their fleets to the Allies. Almost 70 percent of these conscripted vessels were sunk by Nazi U-boats as they carried Allied war materiel across the Atlantic. In recognition of the owners' sacrifice, after the war the United States allowed them to buy 100 Liberty ships for only $125,000) of their own cash, with the remainder covered by loans guaranteed by the Greek government.

These new fleets quickly expanded, and the Greek officers and seamen the shipowners hired sent critical remittances back home to the country at a time when it was struggling to recover not only from the brutal Nazi occupation but from a devastating civil war triggered by Communist insurgents, a double blow that in the 1950s left much of the country in abject poverty.

When that civil war ended, newly wealthy shipowners like Onassis and Niarchos, brothers-in-law at the time but also fierce rivals, made some of the first major investments in Greece to help jump-start its postwar economy. Onassis bought a small company that had three single-engine airplanes, renamed it Olympic Airways, and built it into a renowned international carrier. Niarchos tried to outdo him by building the country's first shipyard.

Both tycoons continued to make investments in Greece throughout their lives, creating thousands of well-paying jobs. In fact, on the day after Onassis married Jackie Kennedy, in 1968, he didn't go on a honeymoon—

he spent his time negotiating a $400 million investment deal with the military junta then ruling Greece. He even courted the junta's leader, Georgios Papadopoulos, by inviting him and



The island of Santorini is surrounded by blue; access to the sea is Greece's great resource. Inset: Shipping magnate Vassilis Constantakopoulos as a teenager.



The port of Onassis, on Skorpios, the private island of Greek Tycoon Aristotle Onassis, where he could feel secure.



Constantakopoulos on a friend's boat, which he named Carmen, after his wife. He later named a cargo ship after her.

his wife to dine with the new Mrs. Onassis on their island.

Throughout their lives, Onassis and Niarchos competed for women, real estate, ever larger yachts (190-foot Creole for Niarchos, the 325-foot Christina for Onassis), and private islands (Skorpios for Onassis, Spetsopoula for Niarchos). After they died the competition continued, as their various philan-





Clockwise from left: 1) Stavros Niarchos, Onassis' chief rival, right, aboard the Creole, a three-masted 190-foot schooner, en route to Lisbon in July, 1959. 2) Niarchos with his fourth wife, Charlotte Ford. The Stavros S. Niarchos Foundation is building an $800 million cultural center in Athens. Onassis created his own Alexander Onassis Public Benefit Foundation in memory of his son. Its Onassis Cultural Center in Athens was built first. 3) Aristotle and Jackie Onassis, on the street, September 1970.



thropies focused on building projects at home and on expanding studies of Greece and its heritage throughout the world.

Onassis left half his estate, worth about $1 billion when he died, in 1975, to a foundation named for his son Alexander, who had died two years earlier in a plane crash. It endowed the Onassis Cardiac Surgery Center, in Athens, the first hospital in Greece certified to do heart and lung transplants. And the Onassis Foundation just completed the 194,000-square-foot Onassis Cultural Center, in Athens, and awards 135

scholarships per year to Greek postgraduate students.

When Niarchos died, in 1996, he had an estimated net worth of 5 billion. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation has made grants in the arts, education, health, and medicine to the tune of $1.2 billion to date. Its most ambitious

project is the $800 million Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, now being built in Athens. Designed by architect Renzo Piano, it will include new homes for the National Library of Greece and the Greek National Opera.

This is quite a legacy to live up to for Greece's 900 shipowning families, who command the largest shipping fleet in the world, ruling an industry whose income is carefully hidden, but the annual gross revenues of which

are estimated at $60 billion. What are they doing to help their country as it faces economic catastrophe and their countrymen endure severe reductions in their standard of living?

They are doing practically nothing," says an Athenian executive who doesn't want to be identified because he has business dealings with several shipowners. "They're investing little of their money inside Greece, creating few jobs beyond the positions they need to maintain their Greek offices, buying no Greek bonds, and paying absolutely no taxes on the earnings from their ships and nowhere near the taxes they should pay on their assets inside the country."

Those shipowners who would discuss the crisis with me, like Nicos Vernicos and his brother George, whose family has been in shipping since 1850, denounce such criticism. "Any charges that Greek shipowners have not been helping their country are blatantly false, as one fact alone shows," insists George Vernicos, whose searching gaze and weathered features reveal his ties to the sea. "In the last 10 years Greek shipowners have brought into the country about $178 billion in foreign exchange through money spent by their Greek offices, salaries paid to Greek crews, purchases made from Greek companies, taxes paid on Greek-flag vessels, and extensive real estate they have bought. What other group has brought that kind of money into the country, or even come close?"

One reason shipowners often give to explain why they're not investing more in Greece is that the returns from shipping itself aren't that great these days. "Since 2008 rates have been in a free fall, with earnings well below break-even levels in many areas," says Basil Papachristidis, a Canadian-born shipowner whose father sold 10 frigates to Onassis in 1946, one of which was later converted into the Christina. "Banks are calling in loans, seizing ships, and causing owners to lose their entire equity. It is quite possible a number of owners will go bankrupt in the next 12-18 months."

But he and other industry experts concede that the big shipping families are well diversified and are not in any real financial trouble, since they piled up huge cash reserves earlier in the decade, when rates soared tenfold in just a few years. And they know how to squeeze out profits even in hard times, as Onassis did during the Great Depression. He broke into shipping in 1932 when he bought six Canadian freighters for $30,000 each—essentially their scrap value—and kept them working through the decade.

If all that's true, why haven't the major shipowners used more of their profits to make investments in Greece, create jobs, and help revive the Greek economy?

"Look, no one is making big investments in Greece," says Nicos Vernicos. "And that is mainly the fault of the politicians and the unions, because they have made Greece an extremely difficult place to do business."

In the past, several ship owners have made sizable investments in the country. They include the Chandris family, who have built hotels; the Latsis family, who have bought banks (and



Young Vassilis Constantakopoulos. He "never let the frustrations that come with trying to invest in Greece deter him."

have loaned their 405-foot yacht, the Alexander, to such eminences as Prince Charles, George H.W. Bush, and even Marlon Brando); the Constantakopoulos family, who are building the biggest resort in the country; and the Laskaridis family, who have invested in hotels, casinos, and an airline.

But even these committed Greek shipowners have cautionary tales to tell about investing in their homeland. Most of them are reluctant to speak on the record, but not Thanasis Laskaridis, who, with his brother Panos, owns the landmark Grande Bretagne Hotel in Athens and a 20 percent interest in Aegean Airlines, in addition to their 58 ships.

After doing well in shipping, the Laskaridis brothers decided to make extensive investments in their homeland. "Our motivation was initially a general desire for new, well-set-up, well-capitalized, and profitable landmark projects that would generate several thousand new jobs in Greece and involve also substantial foreign multinationals and their know-how," Thanasis says. The brothers' total investments in Greece at one point reached "in excess of $1 billion," he says, and they created more than 3,500 jobs and produced huge benefits for the country, including

$700 million in tax revenues 'om two casinos.

"As time went by," Thanasis says, "we started losing the multinationals,

other than in a management capacity, because Greece is

chaotic, corrupt, and unfriendly toward foreign investors. The reason

Greece is in such a sad state, he says, is that its economy is under the tight control of an oligarchy of "no more than 10 families and no more than 10 unions…who have systematically fought and destroyed any serious effort by any outsiders, including Greek ship owners, to establish

themselves as major players in the country's economy."

"Shipowners are clever, and, generally, wealthy people have no desire, when they are achieving miracles all over the world, to be treated like idiots in their own country," he says. "If you want to know why they don't make major investments in Greece, look at the labor laws, look at the exit of almost all multinationals—and there were never that many—look at the press barons and how they use their influence to get government contracts for their other business interests, look at the total destruction of value of private equity investment in Greece."

Finally, he says, look at the fact that the last elected government of Greece took the min-

> "Shipowners are clever…[they] have no desire to be treated like idiots…"

istries of shipping and tourism, the most productive engines in the Greek economy, and folded them into other ministries.

"It's as if Saudi Arabia had disbanded its oil ministry!" he exclaims.

The absurdity, cronyism, and corruption that dominate Greek political life have moved Laskaridis's family to reduce their investments in Greece by about 70 percent, he says. "Our core activity [shipping] is a global and highly competitive business, so problems including corruption were not new to us. However, tolerating such practices in our own homeland was simply unacceptable, as well as hugely damaging psychologically."

One of the more disturbing sights, he notes, is seeing the marble steps in front of his family's historic Grande Bretagne Hotel, in the heart of Athens on Constitution Square, being torn up by extremists so they could throw pieces at the police during violent demonstrations, which occur on a regular basis these days.

His family spent $300 million to buy and another $115 million to renovate the hotel and make it one of the best in Europe in time for the 2004 Olympics, he says, but the failure of the government to provide a safe and stable operating environment for it hardly motivates the Laskaridises to make any further investments in the country.

"Greek shipowners will not throw good money after bad," he says. "Please be sure that we will all repatriate capital when, at the very least, we can walk to the center of our city without risk of physical violence. This is the

least we demand, and it is not that hard to achieve. Everyone but Greece has done it."

One major Greek shipowner, however, never let the frustrations that come with trying to invest in Greece deter him from pursuing his vision—to uplift his native region—even though it took him 25 years to realize it. The man was Vassilis Constantakopoulos, and his dream was to make Navarino Bay, on the western coast of the Peloponnese, an international tourist destination of the first rank. Although only half of the planned resort

complex is finished, it has already begun to earn that distinction, with listings in many travel magazines as one of the top 10 luxury resorts in the world.

Captain Vassilis, as he is known, died in January 2011, only a year after the opening of his eco-friendly resort, Navarino Dunes, the first of four sites at Costa Navarino, a dream that took him a lifetime to achieve. I learned his story from two of his three sons: Costis, who runs Costamare, the family's shipping fleet, and Achilles, who directs its tourist facilities. (The third, Christos, runs the family's mining operations.)

I met the brothers in the conference room of Costamare's modern headquarters between Athens and Piraeus. Costis, 42, a lean, reserved engineer, and Achilles, an outgoing 40-yearold with a staccato delivery, did not need much prodding to talk about their father. They said Vassilis was born in a small village some 40 miles from where he would later commit $1.3- billion to build his tourist mecca, which will ultimately include five hotels, four golf courses, luxury villas, a sports complex, and a marina.

"My father left at 13 for Athens," Costis says. "He worked at three jobs—selling buttons, delivering milk, and busing tables—to survive while going to night school. Then he became a deckhand and worked his way up to

seaman, engineer, and finally captain." In 1962 Vassilis met his future wife, Carmen, a stewardess on Olympic Airways, and they married two years later. When they started a family in 1969, he decided to look for work that would keep him closer to home. Carmen persuaded him to abandon his first idea—opening a grocery store—and go into the business he knew: shipping. He bought his first small vessel, a 2,000-ton cargo ship,

which he named Carmen, in 1974, and slowly began adding others. "He quickly saw that the Greeks who were focused on cargo ships, bulk carriers, and tankers were struggling for charters then, but Northern Europeans who were shipping to containers were doing much better," Costis explains. "So he decided to concentrate on con-



Thanasis Laskaridis in his office. He lamented "no more than 10 families and no more than 10 unions," control Greece.

tainer ships."

As his fleet grew, he began ordering new container vessels from shipyards in East Asia, and he was one of the first to spot the boon that an expanding Chinese economy offered for shipping. Eventually he started chartering

many of his ships to the Chinese state shipping group, COSCO, which propelled him to the forefront of container shipping.

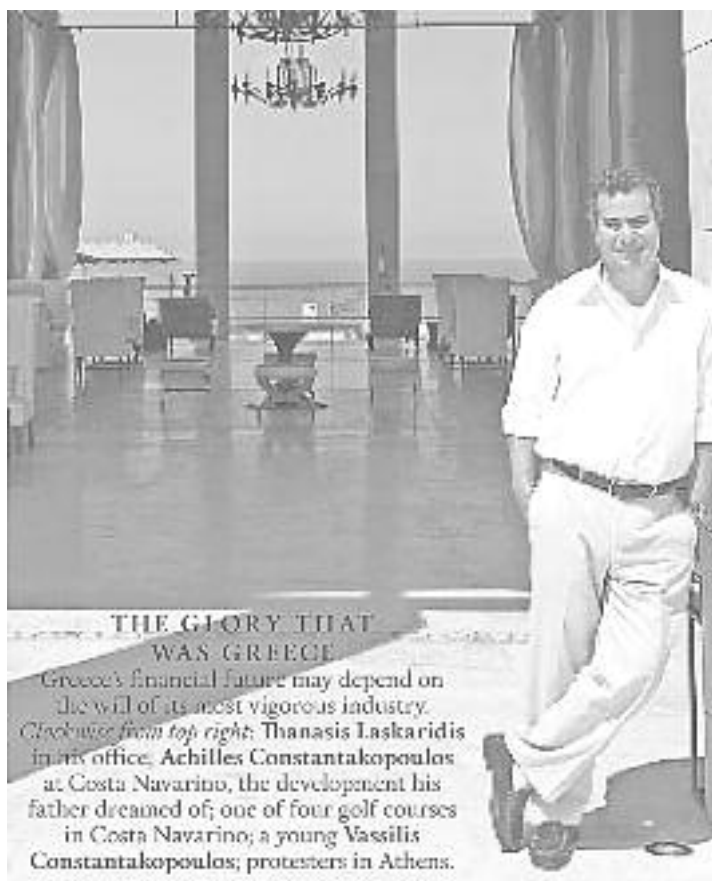
Throughout these boom years, says Costis, Vassilis was always looking for opportunities to help his country. "He wanted to do something in his home area, something that would help people there," Achilles says. "And he decided that the way to achieve both goals was to make the Navarino coast, one of the most beautiful areas in the Mediterranean but completely undeveloped at the time, into an international tourist destination."

It took almost 20 years, but ultimately he cobbled together 2,470 acres for the resort from more than 1000 owners. But that was only half the battle. To get all the permits and authorizations he needed to start building, he

eventually had to get more than 3000 signatures from officials in scores of government agencies.

So far, some $760 million has been spent on Costa Navarino, and the final bill is projected to reach $1.3 billion, according to Achilles. The Greek government has agreed to provide a subsidy of $130 million, half of which has been contributed thus far, he says.

Although the project is only partially completed, it has already created a boom in the region. More than 2,000 workers were hired to build the first two



Achilles Constantakopoulos at Costa Navarino, the resort his father dreamed of. It only needed 3000 signatures to build.

hotels, which now employ 1,200 people directly, according to

Achilles. "As a result, the area is flourishing, with new shops in surrounding towns opening every week, while thousands have closed in the rest of the country because of the economic crisis."

Vassilis, a heavy smoker who was diagnosed with cancer in 2005, lived to see only the first part of the resort open. Six weeks before he died, he spoke at a dinner in his honor, and his words could serve as an

exhortation to his fellow shipowners. "Our nation today finds itself at the edge of the abyss," he said. "To debate who is to blame and how we wound up in such a sad state doesn't help our condition. What we must do now is to focus on how we can all join together to save our country, to assist in any way we can our neighbors…and to press our politicians to move forcefully to initiate the reforms that will stimulate growth and prosperity… If that is done, with sacrifices from all of us…our country will achieve a level of admiration worthy of its history and its heritage."

Most of the shipowners who were willing to speak about their country's current disastrous circumstances professed their own patriotism, but they are not ready to help steer their country through the financial maelstrom that has engulfed it, they say, because they don't have confidence in the country's leaders. They are instead clinging to a wait-and-see attitude to find out if, in fact, Greece can be rescued by infusions of money and management from the European community and the IMF.

There seems to be a mixture of hope and apprehension among the shipping giants, similar to that expressed by Thanasis Laskaridis: "Greece has great potential. It is still today one of the world's best places to live: great scenery, culture, climate, some of the best beaches in the world, and nice, hardworking people. Once we bring our bloated bureaucracy under control and replace most of our current politicians, Greece will boom.

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Vasillis Constantakopoulos and his wife Carmen, standing in St. Mark's Square in Venice on their honeymoon, in 1964.

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Robert Hecht, Antiquities Dealer Who Sold Ancient Greek Vase to MMA, Dies at 92

By Bruce Weber
The New York Times

Robert E. Hecht, an American expatriate antiquities dealer who skipped in and out of trouble for much of his career, weathering accusations that he trafficked in illicit artifacts, including a 2,500-year-old Greek vase that he sold for more than $1 million to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, died on Wednesday at his home in Paris. He was 92.

His death was confirmed by his wife, Elizabeth.

An urbane world traveler with an often coy and seemingly imperturbable manner, Mr. Hecht began running afoul of the authorities in the early 1960s, when he was accused of dealing in looted art in Italy and smuggling coins out of Turkey.

In the case of the Greek vase, sold to the Metropolitan in 1972, an Italian judge, acting on a claim that it had been looted from an excavation site near Rome, issued a warrant for Mr. Hecht's arrest; the warrant was subsequently revoked.

"I have never been involved in the illegal exportation of art objects," Mr. Hecht declared to The New York Times in 1973, adding, "I have never spent one minute in a cell."

The controversy over the vase — a vessel known as a krater that was used to mix wine and water and was painted and signed by the artist Euphronios in the late sixth century B.C. — lingered for more than 30 years, with claims and counterclaims and conflicting testimony.



Robert E. Hecht

Mr. Hecht repeatedly said he had handled the sale of the krater on behalf of its owner, a Lebanese coin dealer whose family had acquired it in 1920. The Italian authorities maintained that it had been illegally dug up and smuggled from an Etruscan tomb in Cerveteri, 20 miles northwest of Rome, in 1971. The Met finally returned the Euphronios krater to Italy in 2008.

By that time, Mr. Hecht had long been under suspicion of involvement in a conspiracy to steer looted artifacts through illicit channels to museums, including the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

The investigation began in the 1990s, when a raid on two Swiss warehouses used by Mr. Hecht and one of his so-called conspirators, an Italian dealer name Giacomo Medici, turned up photographs of dirt-encrusted artifacts. Italian officials said the photographs indicated that Mr. Hecht knew he was trafficking in newly — and illegally — unearthed treasures. Mr. Hecht acknowledged doing business with Mr. Medici but said he had no knowledge that the dirt-covered artifacts were stolen.

In 2000, investigators found notes for a manuscript in Mr. Hecht's Paris apartment in which Mr. Hecht describes different versions of his life as a dealer. In one version, prosecutors said, he all but admitted that the Euphronios krater was unearthed at Cerveteri; in another, they said, he wrote that he acquired it from a Lebanese dealer. The first version, Mr. Hecht scoffed, was written as a lark — invented, he said, to illustrate the Italians' version of events.

After a trial, Mr. Medici, who was said to have supplied Mr. Hecht with the Euphronios krater, was convicted in 2004. But Mr. Hecht, whose own trial began in 2005, was never convicted. Just last month a three-judge panel in Italy declared that the statute of limitations on the charges against him had expired.

A similar ruling ended the trial of another alleged conspirator, Marion True, a former curator of antiquities at the Getty, in 2010.

Their cases, closely watched in the art world, led many museums to institute policies preventing the purchase of ancient artworks with murky provenance.

Mr. Hecht's lawyer, Alessandro Vannucci, said afterward that the decision to end the trial did not do justice to his client, who deserved to be exonerated.

"He was, if not exonerated, never proven guilty," Elizabeth Hecht said in an interview on Thursday. "In 13 years they couldn't find anything to pin on him. So I say he was innocent."

Robert Emanuel Hecht Jr. (his wife was unsure whether his middle name was spelled with one m or two) was born in Baltimore on June 3, 1919, into the family that owned the Hecht chain of department stores. He graduated from Haverford College and served in the Navy during World War II. Fluent in German, he worked after the war as a civilian translator for the United States Army. Then he began classical studies at the University of Zurich and as a fellow at the American Academy in Rome.

Mr. Hecht's first marriage, to Anita Liebman, ended in divorce; their daughter, Daphne Howat, survives him. In addition to his wife, the former Elizabeth Chase, whom he married in 1953, other survivors include a sister, Nancy Campbell; two daughters, Andrea and Donatella Hecht; four grandchildren and a great-granddaughter.

"Bob was always someone who could let things fall off his shoulders, like a duck," Elizabeth Hecht said when asked how her husband had borne such persistent and intense scrutiny by the authorities. "What he didn't want to know about, he was able to ignore. He was very good at that."

DEATH NOTICES

■ BELTSOS, GEORGE
BROCKTON, MA (From The Enterprise, published on Feb. 7) - George Beltsos, 90, of Brockton, passed away Saturday, Feb. 4, 2012, at his home in Brockton. He was the husband of Evanthia Beltsos. Born March 17, 1921, in Greece, he was the son of the late Steven Beltsos and Maria (Pissiou) Beltsos. George worked for Christys Supermarkets and Deftos Liquors for several years. He was a member of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Brockton and enjoyed gardening. He is survived by his wife, Evanthia Beltsos of Brockton; his brother, Sam Beltsos of Ohio; his sister, Stella Zoikas of Greece; his nieces, Kathy Iantosca and her husband Joseph of Cohasset, Georgia Beltsios of Brockton and Chrysoula Honigbaum and her husband Howard of Florida; his great-nephews, Steven, Michael and Nicholas Iantosca. Funeral service in the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, 457 Oak St., Brockton. Donations may be sent to Alzheimer's Association , 311 Arsenal St., Watertown, MA 02472.

■ BRACHAS, ATHENA
NEW LONDON, CT (From The Day, published on Jan. 29) – Athena P. Brachas, 95, of 40 Franklin St., New London, died Wednesday night, Jan. 25, 2012, at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital. Athena was born in Lemnos, Greece, daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. Costa Papas. Athena was an avid seamstress. She was a member of St. Sophia Hellenic Orthodox Church in New London. She found pleasure bowling for several women's bowling leagues. She was also proud of her Greek heritage, which included cooking and music. Athena enjoyed everything in her life, her family, her friends, her walks and watching baseball. Athena had a laryngectomy and was a member of the Tri-County New Voice Club. She volunteered with the American Cancer Society going to hospitals and colleges, educating people about laryngectomies. She also was known for teaching people how to speak after their voice box was removed. She is survived by two sons, John Brachas of Groton and George Brachas of New London; two grandchildren, Anthony Brachas of Norwich and Tami Bree of Montville; and three great-grandsons, Justin Brachas, Joseph Brachas and Niko Bree all of Montville. Funeral services will be held at St. Sophia Hellenic Orthodox Church, New London. Please omit flowers and make donations instead to Hospice Southeastern Connecticut, 227 Dunham St., Norwich, CT 06360.

■ CHRISTOFILOS, ELLY
BERKELEY, CA (From Inside Bay Area, published on Jan. 27) – Elly Angelides Christofilos a longtime resident of Berkeley Was born in Corinthos, Greece, in 1918, into a historical and political family. She studied foreign languages at the Greek gymnasium (high school), and later at the American College for Girls. She was well educated in French, English and Philosophy. After the German occupation of Greece, Elly worked with the newly formed government under the leadership of Themistoklis Sophoulis. She worked as a private secretary to the Secretary of State, Constantin Rentis. Instead of continuing a political career as her father had wanted, she came to the United States in 1951. In 1952 her close friend from Greece, Nicholas Christofilos, the renowned physicist, also came to the U.S. and they were married. One son was born, Nicholas C. Christofilos, Jr., in 1956. He was born with congenital anemia and died at the age of 27. Elly always maintained a high standard of values and lived by high principles. With her sharp mind and brilliant common sense she applied these principles to the upbringing of her son. After the tragic death of her son, to whom she devoted her life, she was consumed with bereavement and never fully recovered. Her son was a brilliant student at UC Berkeley studying mathematics and music. After his passing, the Music Department hosted two concerts in his memory and Elly established the "Nicholas C. Christofilos, Jr. Award." This prize is special in that it recognizes human values as well as academic excellence. The majority of her estate is given to the Music Department Library, a portion of which will be named in memory of Nicholas. A longtime resident of Berkeley, Elly was active in Berkeley civic affairs. She was one of the founders of the Berkeley Property Owners Association. She was also a member of the Berkeley Democratic Club, the League of Women Voters, the UC Art Museum, the Berkeley Early Music Society, the Berkeley Chorus, the Chancellor's Circle, the Gordon Sproul Associates, and the Council of Foreign Affairs. Elly put her political acumen to work in Berkeley politics in the 1970's. As a moderate Democrat, Elly realized that her party needed the Republican vote to win. In one election, after she was informed of the absence of the Republicans from the polls, Elly singlehandedly made hundreds of telephone calls to Republicans. As a result of her efforts, the Republicans came to the polls and gave the moderate Democrats a victory, which made Elly very proud. This alliance between moderate Democrats and Republicans which Elly pioneered changed the course of Berkeley politics. Elly will be remembered for her strong character and compassionate nature. She was a lady of stature and grace with a wonderful sense of humor, despite her great losses. She died in Concord, California on January 23, 2012 at the age of 93 in the loving home of her longtime caregiver Aya Avecilla and her family. Services will be held at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Ascension, 4700 Lincoln Avenue, Oakland on January 30, 2012. Donations may be made to the Music Department of the University of California, Berkeley, or the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Ascension, Oakland, in memory of Nicholas C. Christofilos Jr. and Elly Christofilos.

■ CONITS, BILL
GREENVILLE, SC (From The Greenville News, published on Jan. 25) – Bill Speros Conits, 91, of 1209 North Main St, Greenville, SC passed Tuesday, January 24, 2012. He was born in Amyclae, Sparta, Greece, and was the son of the late Speros and Kannela Antonakos Koniditsiotis. He was a veteran of the Greek Military and immigrated to the United States in 1951. Mr. Conits was a partner in the Carolina Drive Inn Restaurant on Buncombe Rd. in Greenville from 1953 until retirement. He was an avid outdoorsman and gardener. He was a member of St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral and a member of the Laconian Society.He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Vangelia Conits; two daughters, Georgia Coundoussias and her husband, George, Faye Dimopoulos and her husband, Pete; grandchildren, Lea and Demetri Coundoussias, Vasilee and Nicholas Dimopoulos; sisters, Pota Petrakos, Bessie Kefalos, and Stella Lenardis, all of Greenville and Georgia Vinios of Athens, Greece; brothers, John S. Conits, Jimmy S. Conits of Greenville, Pete S. Conits of Baltimore, Md., and Elias S. Conits of Amyclae, Greece. He was predeceased by his daughter, Connie Conits. The funeral service was conducted at St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral. Memorials may be made to St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Building Fund, 406 N. Academy St., Greenville, SC 29601.

This is a service to the community. Announcements of deaths may be telephoned to the Classified Department of The National Herald at (718) 784-5255, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST or e-mailed to: *classifieds@thenationalherald.com*

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Niacrhos Foundation Announces Second Installment of $130M Initiative

ATHENS, GREECE (PR Newswire) - In line with its decision on January 23, 2012 to commit $130/€100 million to help alleviate the severe consequences of the developing crisis in Greece, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation's Board of Directors today approved grants totaling $12.1/€9.2 million towards a number of not-for-profit organizations around the country. The grants are the second installment and part of the €100 million initiative, following the earlier announcement of grants supporting the Social Housing Program and the operation of Day Centers for the homeless (PRAKSIS), and Food Aid support for families and other organizations (Artos-Drasi). The Foundation is also in the process of evaluating a subsequent number of additional grants totaling approximately $15.2/€11.5 million.

Today's decision underscores the Foundation's firm belief that the crisis has reached such dimensions that immediate action and relief are critical and essential. The second installment of funds will be made available to 16 organizations for social welfare, health and medicine and educational programs.



Greek shipping tycoon Stavros Niarchos.

Following is a listing under respective program area:

SOCIAL WELFARE
- Amymoni
- Association of Social Responsibility for Children and Youth – SKEP
- Estia
- Food Bank Greece
- Life Line
- Mundo en Armonia (Greece)
- Network for Children's Rights
- Omada Aigaiou
- Pankritios Association of Parents and Friends of Children with Neoplasia "Iliaktida"
- Praksis
- Social Work Foundation
- SOS Villages

HEALTH & MEDICINE
- High Dependency Unit and Nephrology Clinic in "Aglaia Kyriakou" Children's Hospital in Athens
- Merimna
- Pediatric Trauma Care Unit in "Aglaia Kyriakou" Children's Hospital in Athens

EDUCATION
- Museum of Greek Children's Art

In addition to these organizations, the Foundation is spearheading several initiatives as part of this round of grantmaking, including a food aid program for schools intended to assist approximately 3,000 students; installation of photovoltaic panels on buildings hosting non-profit organizations aiming to save energy and consequently reduce operating expenses; and a program aiming to assist approximately 100 schools throughout the country, in upgrading their Information Technology (IT) infrastructure capacity.

In announcing the $130/€100 million commitment last month, the Foundation had expressed its hope to inspire others to partake in this initiative. It is with a great sense of appreciation and hope that others will follow too, that the Foundation acknowledges that an individual, who wishes to remain anonymous, has declared his intention to donate an additional $270,000/€205,000 in total to support a number of the above mentioned organizations.

Ambassador of Greece Vasilis Kaskarelis in a letter to "Niarchos Foundation" wrote that "At this critical time of dire need for Greece, this grant provides substantive support to those most affected by the crisis, assisting them with the fundamentals of daily life, while at the same time it creates options for young people by investing in their future."

Archbishop Demetrios in his letter to "Niarhos" stated that "This contribution which will benefit present and generations in Greece is a testament of the purpose and philosophy of the Foundation."

From 1996 until today, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation has approved grant commitments of €948 million/$1.242 billion, through 2,115 grants to non-profit organizations in 102 nations around the world. Out of the Foundation's total grant commitments, 79% of funds have been directed to organizations and initiatives in Greece, through 1,013 grants.

The Foundation's largest single gift (€566/$790 million) is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), in Athens. The project is approaching the beginning of the construction phase, with excavation works already in progress at the site. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation firmly believes that the project is of national importance, even more so under the current socio-economic conditions. It remains a testament and a commitment to the country's future, at a critical historical juncture. It is also an engine of short- to mid-term economic stimulus, which is essential under the current circumstances.

Israeli PM Pays Historic Visit to Cyprus, Proclaiming "Warming Ties"

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paid a historic visit to Cyprus on Thursday, declaring the two countries' warming ties a "natural relationship" in a reflection of the rapidly shifting alliances in this turbulent part of the world.

The visit — the first ever by an Israeli leader to the nearby island nation — was also a testimony to warming ties that have emerged from political and economic turmoil, as well as new economic prospects. It followed a succession of reciprocal visits by senior officials from both countries and several low-level agreements.

Netanyahu's office said the one-day visit "was designed to strengthen the improving ties between the two nations." The two sides will discuss cooperation in energy matters, agriculture, health and maritime research, and sign a disaster relief and a search and rescue agreement, it said.

"It's a natural relationship for us," Netanyahu said at the start of his meeting with Cypriot President Dimitris Christofias.

Cyprus government spokesman Stefanos Stefanou told The Associated Press beforehand that the visit "illustrates the great dynamic driving forward the improvement in relations between the two countries."

Although Cyprus is only a 50-minute flight away from Tel Aviv, ties between the two have long been chilly.

Nicosia backed the Palestinians in their quest for an independent state and looked on warily as Israel built military and trade relations with regional powerhouse Turkey, which doesn't recognize Cyprus as a sovereign state and has occupied its north since 1974.

But Israel's relations with Turkey have deteriorated dramatically, while Cyprus has been looking to cement ties with neighbors as a bulwark against Ankara's growing regional influence. Also, Cyprus can't rely as before on top ally, Greece, which is grappling with crushing financial problems.

Another potential bridge between Israel and Cyprus is the discovery of huge offshore natural gas deposits in the Mediterranean Sea. The same U.S. company, Noble Energy, is leading the exploration efforts in both countries.



AP PHOTO/PETROS KARADJIAS

Cyprus president Dimitris Christofias, left, shakes hands with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the divided capital Nicosia, Cyprus, Thursday, Feb. 16, 2012.

Turkey, however, has threatened the finds. It opposes any Greek Cypriot oil and gas search that denies breakaway Turkish Cypriots in the north of the divided island what it contends is a rightful claim to gas wealth. And it has dismissed a Cypriot-Israeli deal demarcating their maritime borders as null and void.

Last year, Ankara dispatched a warship-escorted research vessel to look for fuel in waters off Cyprus' southern coast, provoking Christofias to demand the Turks abandon their "gunboat diplomacy."

Cyprus was split into an internationally recognized Greek-speaking south and a breakaway Turkish-speaking north in 1974 when Turkey invaded following a coup attempt by supporters of union with Greece.

Until recently, Turkey was Israel's strongest ally in the Muslim world but those ties frayed badly over Palestinian casualties during Israel's 2009 war in the Gaza Strip. Relations took another blow after Israeli commandoes killed nine Turks aboard a Turkish-led flotilla that tried to breach Israel's naval blockade of Gaza in May 2010.

The rupture with Turkey and the toppling of Egypt's longtime leader Hosni Mubarak made Israel more vulnerable in a region already hostile to the Jewish state and forced it to look for other alliances.

"There is no doubt that the loss of Turkey pushed Israel in the direction of Greece and Cyprus," said Alon Liel, a former director of Israel's foreign ministry and one-time envoy to Turkey. "With Cyprus it has become more significant because of the gas."

Energy security is a strategic concern for any country, but Israel has other interests in courting Cyprus, said Tim Potier, political analyst and law professor at the University of Nicosia.

"Israel is looking to strengthen bonds with a fast-dwindling list of friendly neighbors as one-time regional friends and allies have turned into potential rivals amid the tumult of the Arab Spring," Potier said. "Cyprus' EU membership, proximity and own gas wealth potential make the island a natural ally for an increasingly isolated Israel."

Stefanou said Cypriot-Israeli energy cooperation is a key aspect to budding relations, but that there are others, including defense. He said the EU member island's strong links to Arab countries could "act to promote dialogue" with Israel.

But Liel also said the growing Israel-Cyprus alliance could hurt Israel by driving Turkey even further into the camp of Hamas militants who rule Gaza.

"They (the Turks) see Israel aiding Cyprus and in return, they will want to aid Hamas," he said. "The Turks feel that if Israel is going toward Cyprus they will try to strengthen Hamas" by donating money to its government.



With radical or anarchist youth prepared to do bloody battle with police, the other tens of thousands of protesters gathered in the square outside were almost an afterthought.



Riot police are seen through tear gas during clashes in Downtown Athens as lawmakers voted on harsh austerity measures demanded to keep the country solvent and in the Eurozone.



PHOTOS: EUROKINISSI, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Protesters pass by a burning cinema in Athens. Riots engulfed central portions of the city and dozens of buildings went up in flames in mass protests against austerity measures.

EU Tightens the Noose on Greece as New Bailout is Delayed

Continued from page 1

April. New Democracy leader Antonis Samaras, whose party is leading in the polls but not by a majority and wouldn't rule Parliament, sent a letter complying although he had previously refused and had opposed austerity when former Prime Minister George Papandreou's administration was in power. Samaras, though, couched his support and said he reserved the right to make "policy modifications" to place more emphasis on a vague recovery program he hasn't revealed if he wins. Papandreou has given his pledge to continue the austerity measures that drove him out of office in November, 2011 after 18 months of protests, riots, and strikes.

Eurozone chief Jean-Claude Juncker said Greece was set to get the new aid but that the country would have to establish a special escrow account into which as much as 70 percent or more of the second bailout would have to be dedicated to pay back creditors, leaving little for beleaguered Greeks or the government. He and Venizelos also said there was a plan they didn't reveal how to make an additional $423 million in cuts in areas other than pensions.

An edgy Venizelos said he was fearful that some "powers in Europe" want to force Greece out of the Eurozone and there were reports that Germany, which is the biggest contributor to the loans but which has demanded the stiffest conditions, as well as the Netherlands and Finland said they want other political parties in Greece's fractured and divisive political system who are diametrically opposed to each other to give unanimous support.

With mistrust of Athens running high, EU sources told Reuters that Eurozone officials had considered whether it was possible to delay part or all of the rescue deal while still avoiding a disorderly default.

Since the crisis began two years ago, Greece has engaged in high-stakes brinksmanship with the Troika, constantly delaying demanded reforms and still has failed to implement privatization of state-owned entities nor sold nor leased state-owned properties to raise money.

MISTRUST RUNS HIGH

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble said he



EUROKINISSI

Evangelos Venizelos (L), Finance Minister in the coalition government headed by Lucas Papademos (R) makes a point during the Parliamentary debate on the austerity measures.

doubted Greek political will. "When you look at the internal political discussions in Greece and the opinion polls, then you have to ask who will really guarantee after the elections ... that Greece will stand by what we are now agreeing with Greece," he told German media, prompting Greek President Karolos Papoulias, who has given up his $392,000 annual salary, to swing back and said he was tired of German insults, showing the level of the tension. Another German official, who was unidentified, told Reuters that "questions remain that are very important to Germany and other member states about the sustainability of the program."

While the political wrangling continued, Greeks were suffering and bracing themselves for the layoffs of 150,000 workers over the next three years as the Troika said that New Democracy and PASOK administrations had taken turns packing public payrolls with political hires in return for votes and not acted on structural reforms needed to make the economy competitive. Runaway patronage and corruption have overrun the country's ability to sustain itself, analysts said, and a report in the respected newspaper <Kathimerini> recently claimed that while Papandreou was making cuts for workers and raising their taxes that he appointed more than dozen new bureaucracies, including one for a tsunami warning.

All those problems have led to what former World Bank official Uri Dadush told Reuters would create the worst economic contraction in the post-World War II era except for the collapse of Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. "On the current path — which is not sustainable in my view — we may very well see Greek GDP go down 25 to 30 percent, which would be historically unprecedented," he said, the same depths the United States suffered during the 1930's Great Depression. The Greek economy has shrunk 6.8 percent, unemployment has soared to 20.8 percent and more than 111,000 businesses have closed because the austerity measures have nearly wiped out Greek consumer purchasing power, with tax rates up to 23 percent also crushing businesses, including restaurants.

Despite all that, Papademos said the alternative – default and outright bankruptcy – was worse and that Greece would face shortages of food, fuel and medicine and social unrest, while some even talked of a new Civil War as Greece's rich elite, who reportedly keep their money in other countries, have escaped sacrifice and while some 50 tax evaders have been arrested, no major figures have been prosecuted. Tax evasion is costing the country an estimated $60 billion. And the Greek downturn has already lasted twice as long as the average crisis and yet there is no end in sight, according to Mark Weisbrot, Co-Director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a think tank in Washington.

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A Porous Fig Leaf

Yielding to a mountain of pressure, Archbishop Demetrios issued a half-hearted appeal on Wednesday to the community "for support of the people of Greece."

"The financial crisis," he wrote..."has reached proportions where the suffering of innocents and the ordeal of common people cry out for urgent and substantive help...we must respond by offering real and tangible assistance to our brethren ...by making a donation to the Relief Fund for the People of Greece of the Archdiocese."

Certainly, even a little bit is more than nothing at all, but it should not have taken two years to issue an Archiepiscopal Encyclical calling for a donation to a fund.

If he were really serious about it, he would have gathered the leading organizations and members of the community and formed a panamerican united front for the assistance of the people of Greece. In that case, a major campaign would have been undertaken directly, and a real challenge would have been issued to the various Greek-American communities across the country – and beyond – in a genuine effort to raise a substantial amount of money, as the circumstances evidently demand.

Simply offering a symbolic fig leaf, however, sufficiently clothes neither him nor our community.

Straight from a Shipowner's Lips

The wealthy Greek shipowner embodies the dynamic, risk-taking, free Greek spirit, and stands as one of the few sources of pride we have remaining. His success resembles that of the fabulously wealthy Greeks of the Diaspora in that they have earned their fortunes outside of Greece.

Still, we do not understand how it is possible that the shipowners are exempted, by law, from taxation in Greece.

Author/journalist Nicholas Gage in an article in the current «Town and Country» magazine seeks to answer a question on many people's minds: what are the wealthy Greek shipowners prepared to do for their country during these difficult times?

Gage came up with much more than just the answer to this question.

Courageous shipowner Thanasis Laskarides attributed, part at least, of the current crises to the tight control of an oligarchy of "no more than 10 families and no more than 10 unions...who have systematically fought and destroyed any serious effort by any outsiders, including Greek ship owners, to establish themselves as major players in the country's economy...

We started losing the multinationals, he added, other than in a management capacity, because Greece is chaotic, corrupt, and unfriendly toward foreign investors".

Some Greek-Americans can vouch for that statement after trying to invest in Greece, only to give up in frustration.

Laskaridis' remarks touch upon the heart of the problems plaguing the Greek economy.

If the issue of the country's orientation are not answered convincingly, unless the prevalent hostility towards entrepreneurship is cleared up, it will not matter how many "haircuts" the Eurozone grants to Greece or how many loans it approves. It will only be a matter of time before Greece needs more and more.

Insightful Graffiti Slogans

Two newspapers – the New York Times and the Financial Times – ran the same photo from Greece in their editions on Tuesday: deep red graffiti on the Bank of Greece's marble wall, with what looked like blood, along with the phrase "steal so that you can have money."

We remind you that the old saying is "work to eat and steal to have".

Graffiti may very likely express the views of only a small minority on the fringes of society, but we should not overlook them.

Like the slogan on a wall in the center of Athens: "bosses, murderers of the people."

Are those two slogans connected to one another? We think so.

The first slogan encouraging people to steal laments the present state of the country, which it attributes to thievery – correctly, to a degree – and also encourages that act as the only way of getting rich, in keeping with today's example of most wealthy people in Greece.

The implication also is "steal without fear," considering that practically no one who has gotten rich on stolen money in Greece ever seems to go to jail.

The second slogan – "bosses, murderers" – indicates a deeper problem. Sadly, a few generations of Greeks have been raised on the premise that the word profit is a filthy one.

We are left to wonder if that mentality is somewhat the result of the image of businessmen engaging in shady deals, stealing, or taking loans on their businesses and sending the money to some Swiss bank account.

There is a lot to be learned from slogans written on walls..

Monti Drops a Bomb

There is an old Greek saying that one hears the truth from a child or a crazy person. And though Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti is neither one nor the other, he is a technocrat, not a politician. That means that his reflexes during his conversations with journalists might not be as well-refined as those displayed by veteran politicos.

The New York Times reported that Monti spoke about the possibility of a Greece's "voluntary" exit from the Eurozone in a visit to the newspaper. "I do not think that they will leave the euro," Monti said. And he added: "but in the unlikely event of such a development, there will be a very strong political response by the Eurozone nations to ensure that such phenomena do not go beyond Greece." Evidently, Monti has not excluded such a possibility.

Ever since that time, growing evidence mounts that the Europeans have lost their patience with Greece and its political leadership. They might be right.

However that could mean trouble for the Eurozone and the increasingly frustrated Greeks who see no hope for a better future for them but especially their children.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AHEPA Chapters in U.S. and Greece Take Action to Assist Greece

To the Editor:

In recent weeks, I have read with much interest comments about the current crisis in Greece and what is being done or not done by Greek-American organizations. I assure you the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) shares this concern. In the past year, AHEPA's 14 chapters in Greece have helped their communities. For example:

• Two Crete chapters purchased medical equipment for local hospitals

• The Kalamata chapter financed a technology that helps the blind to cross streets safely and participates in programs that reforest the countryside

• Chapters in Athens and Thessaloniki helped to purchase computers sorely required by doctors for their work at the Evangelismos Hospital and AHEPA Hospital in Thessaloniki

• The Glyfada chapter purchased a specialized wheelchair (4,000 euro) that has allowed an individual to successfully study abroad

• Chapters have supported Penelopean Day Care Center, Nea Ionia, Athens, with financial contributions and Ahepans have volunteered their time to fix and maintain the center's electrical and plumbing systems

• Chapters purchased heating oil for the winter and participated in food drives to assist the less fortunate

• Athens Chapter HJ1 contributes to the Fulbright Foundation for scholarships and has a "support" program for Greeks of Northern Epirus that provides medical supplies and books to needy institutions in that region

• Ahepans who are doctors have offered free medical services to the needy

• Is this enough? Definitely not. Can more be done? Absolutely.

Here is what AHEPA is doing:

• Partnering with International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) to assist with acquisition of medical supplies and food

• Making available its 501 (c) 3 AHEPA Foundation, Inc. to receive contributions that will directly pay for the shipment and acquisition of medical supplies and food

• Mobilizing AHEPA Greece chapters to liaison with the Ministry of Education to execute a food voucher program for schools

• Mobilizing AHEPA family chapters and outreaching to all Greek-American organizations asking them to contribute financially to AHEPA's program

AHEPA's inquiry into how the organization could assist on a national level began October 2011. We examined the logistical challenges to providing aid efficiently to those in need with meetings with the IOCC and the Embassy of Greece in Washington and came to the conclusion that the course of action presented above is the best one. AHEPA has also communicated with pharmaceutical companies to explore how they can help.

In the interim, AHEPA entrusted its chapters in Greece to identify and address the needs in their local communities, which I believe they capably have done and will continue to do. As executive director, I also look forward to working with the administrators of all Greek-American organizations to leverage the very best of all our resources to provide humanitarian aid to Greece.

AHEPA is proud of the philanthropic and charitable aid it spearheaded during its near 90-year history for Greece, the United States, and worldwide. The organization's record of service is clear. Together with your help, Greek-Americans will make a difference in people's lives.

Basil Mossaidis
Washington, DC

The writer is the Executive Director of the Order of AHEPA.

The Most Effective Ways to Help Greeks In Need

To the Editor:

There have been many discussions published in TNH lately about how to help Greece. I would like to propose the following suggestions:

1. The shipping of goods is ineffective because of the expenses involved and also because the purchasing money should be spent in Greece to support the local market rather than in America (the possible psychological resentment notwithstanding).

2. The collection of money by organizations, societies, Philoptochos, etc., is potentially difficult because of doubts regarding clarity and because of past negative experiences. (We are still wondering where our money is from previous donations.)

The most secure and dignified way to help is through the many respectable and efficient philanthropic organizations in Greece that produce remarkable results in helping the people in need there. Some of them are:

• Το χαμόγελο του παιδιού
www.hamogelo.gr
• Παιδικά Χωριά SOS Ελλάδος
www.sos-villages.gr
• Κιβωτός του κόσμου
www.kivotostoukosmou.org

These websites provide complete information about the organizations and their work and also how to donate through bank accounts, credit cards, Pay Pal, or checks to the local addresses throughout Greece. People can also contact their place of origin about local charities. The churches, for instance, and the Archdiocese in Athens do an outstanding job in helping discretely and effectively.

Thank you in advance for publishing this information.

Sincerely,
Vassiliki Kekela
New York, NY



CHRYSANTHI LIRISTIS / SPECIAL TO THE NATIONAL HERALD

COMMENTARY

The Politics of Cyprus: Is there a Win-Win Situation?

By Nicos A. Rolandis
Special to The National Herald

In August 1922, the waves of the beloved Aegean Sea became red with blood. They marked the end of 2000 years of Hellenism, for more than one million Greeks of Asia Minor. This was preceded by huge errors of the Greeks. A few people were severely punished. Their friends and the allies in the East and the West were watching with indifference.

In July 1974, the waves of the Kyrenia Sea, "the beloved sea of Kyrenia," as the poet lamented, became red with blood. They probably marked the end of a history of 3000 years for 160,000 Greek Cypriots in the north of Cyprus. That was preceded by a series of huge errors. Almost nobody was punished. The friends and the allies in the east and the west were watching with indifference.

History repeats itself. We have proved incorrigible. We commit the same mistakes again and again and we pay the bitter price.

Thirty eight years after 1974, the Cyprus problem is nowhere. There is almost no rational voice around. One silly statement follows another. Almost everything goes for party interests, nothing for the country itself.

I shiver when I follow the events. And I recall what I wrote in my letter of resignation from the post of Foreign Minister in 1983: "With this mentality of ours, we shall be left at the end of the day with the UN resolutions and the occupation." Unfortunately it looks as if the occupation of our country is here to stay.

We have ended up going to Greentree, Long Island, with three "Nos" in our luggage, which constitute the apogee of inconsistency and stupidity:

• "No" to an International Conference, which we were seeking with passion a few years ago, under the same circumstances. I recall our jubilation in Moscow in October 1982, when we included it in the joint communiqué.

• "No" to arbitration, which is included in Article 33 of Chapter 6 of the U.N. Charter, as an obligation of the member-states for peaceful settlements of disputes. Through this stand of ours we contravene the provisions of the Charter.

• "No" to "asphyxiating timeframes" ("Asphyxiating" indeed, after 38 years!). In other words, we are after an open-ended dialogue, which is the perfect recipe for partition and eventual occupation of Cyprus by Turkey. A few years ago we pleaded for "a solution yesterday" and we declared time and again that "we, the victims of aggression, are after a solution as fast as possible."

Now we have the natural gas issue as well. When I started the process back in 1998, among a great deal of irony and derision, I never thought that 10-12 years later we would have in Cyprus so many "wise" men "fully conversant" with all the aspects of the subject, financial, technical, and political. I have made some reasonable proposals in connection with the gas that would address, inter alia, the Turkish threats, either in the form of "hot" incidents, or through the pumping by Turkey of Cyprus' hydrocarbon reserves. At this moment however, when we think again that we are at the center of the universe, some people tend to forget how dangerous Turkey could be, when there exist serious disputes with her. They forget that Turkey was threatening to invade Cyprus since 1965 and she eventually did it in 1974.

In the present imbroglio, with the Cyprus problem at a standstill, the economy rated as junk, and the hydrocarbons under the Damocles Sword of Turkey, I thought, in case the efforts of the U.N. Secretary-General take us nowhere in the weeks to come and the U.N. are ready to strike the stage curtain and pull out of Cyprus, to put forward the proposals that follow, which might lead to a win-win situation for all players:

1. For the solution of the Cyprus problem to have all parties adopt and endorse the Anglo-American-Canadian Plan of November 1978, which was viewed at that time positively by almost all concerned. One might ask whether we can go as far as so many years backwards. The answer is "yes." Nothing much has changed on Cyprus in all these years – some adjustments will be necessary on issues like properties, the settlers (who did not exist at that time) etc. The Plan was quite comprehensive, it was based on the federal system of government and it addressed the basic concerns of the two communities. The inhabitants of Varosha would go back to their homes, upon the commencement of the talks and would stay there, irrespective of the outcome of the negotiations. On the territorial aspect the Gobbi map of 1981 might be adopted. The above plan was accepted at that time by the DISY Party and it was clear that AKEL would have endorsed it as well, had it not been rejected by the Soviet Union on the grounds of its "imperialist" origin (I trust that now, after the accession of Cyprus to Europe and the relations with Israel the "imperialist" element is gone). President Kyprianou was rather negative, but if the stand of AKEL, with which he was in close cooperation was positive, he might have approved of it as well. Furthermore, according to the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Nimetz, who was handling the issue, the Turkish side was not negative either. So, in case there is no exit from the labyrinth of today, probably a Plan of the old days might open the way. Of course it should be noted that a solution under the above plan should be agreed within a reasonable timeframe (6-12 months).

> Let us support a two-state arrangement in Cyprus: Greeks on one side, Turks on the other

2. Natural gas could be used as consideration for the above solution, which is better for the Greek Cypriots compared to what is on the table today. Natural gas, beyond our needs for electricity generation (at present approximately 45 billion cubic feet per year) could be sold and pumped to Greece and/or to Europe through Turkey. There is already a pipeline (296 kilometres long) running from Karacabey, Turkey to Komotini, Greece, which was commissioned in 2007. This pipeline can carry up to 385 billion cubic feet of gas per year. There is also an agreement for the extension of this pipeline to Bulgaria and probably to Europe. If this pipeline cannot be used for any reason, then another pipeline of those crossing Turkish territory to Europe might be used. It should be noted that the transportation of gas by pipelines rather than through liquefaction is considered to be by far the most economic method. Liquefaction (which will of course be used if there is no other solution) needs an investment of more than US$10 billion and consequently the cost per unit becomes very high (that is why Gazprom uses pipelines whenever possible). Transportation directly to Greece by undersea pipeline (1000 kilometres) is extremely difficult and expensive and should be excluded.

3. The Turkish demands in respect of the Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone should be withdrawn, as part of the agreement.

What makes the above a win-win situation?

(A) The Greek Cypriots solve the national problem. The solution is the best ever offered after 1974. They also secure the most economic and profitable solution for their gas and they settle the issue of the Turkish demands and threats.

(B) The Turkish Cypriots solve the problem of Cyprus and they become European citizens. They also participate in the hydrocarbon bonanza.

(C) Greece has the best possible solution of a major national problem and furthermore she secures another source of supply and/or profitable transportation to Europe of natural gas.

(D) For Turkey the solution of the Cyprus problem opens the gates of Europe. She will also have important financial benefits from the transportation of the gas through her territory.

(E) Europe and the International Community settle a problem, which has been a bleeding wound for the past decades.

Somebody may ask: can we trust Turkey and arrange for the passage of our gas through her territory, even after the solution of the Cyprus problem?

My answer is as follows: if we do not trust Turkey after the solution of the Cyprus problem for the safe transportation of our natural gas through her territory, then why do we negotiate with the Turkish Cypriots for the past 35 years a federal solution of our problem? Under the federal system the Turkish Cypriots (and by extension Turkey) will have an "effective participation" in all major decisions of Cyprus. This is provided in the UN and the European resolutions on Cyprus. So, if we do not trust the Turks after a federal settlement, then let us speak clearly. Let us support a two-state arrangement – the Greeks on one side and the Turks on the other. Because there is no other solution left that can be negotiated. And God help us all.

Mr. Rolandis was the Cyprus' Foreign Minister (1978-83) and Minister of Commerce, Industry & Tourism (1998-2003). He was also a member of the Cyprus House of Representatives (1991-96) and chairman of the Liberal Party (1986-98).

LETTER FROM ATHENS

What the Coming Greek Elections Will Bring



by ANDY DABILIS

Special to The National Herald

Sometime in April, if you can believe anything a Greek politician says, the country will have its next election, little more than half into what was supposed to be the four-year term of former Prime Minister George Papandreou, the leader of the PASOK Anti-Socialist party who resigned on Nov. 11, hounded out of office after two years of protests, riots, and strikes against the austerity measures he imposed.

That was on the orders of Greece's owners, the Troika of the European Union-International Monetary Fund-European Central Bank (EU-IMF-ECB), in return for $152 billion in rescue loans and the promise of $169 billion more to keep the country from defaulting, although it is already broke.

The coalition government now in place, led by former ECB Vice-President Lucas Papademos, was shaky from the start and agreed to by Papandreou's bitter rival and former roommate at Amherst College in Massachusetts, Antonis Samaras, who heads the conservative New Democracy party, only because Samaras knew PASOK was



TNH ARCHIVES

Lucas Papademos

cooked and on condition that elections would be held quickly. Those were set for this month, but once everyone knew that wasn't enough time for Papademos to negotiate the second bailout with his banker buddies and get the Greek Parliament he controlled to rubber stamp it, Samaras relented. But as soon as Papandreou, who is clinging to his PASOK leadership like a steel worker on the 100th floor of a new building gripping a beam, suggested Papademos stay in power another year, Samaras saw the end-around and got an agreement for April.

By that time, Papandreou, who looks more and more like a guy in a loony bin wearing a 19th-Century admiral's hat walking around and declaring he's the Prime Minister of Greece, thankfully should be gone, joining former New Democracy Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis, who helped create the economic crisis, in some rabbit-hole somewhere. Good-bye and good riddance.

Samaras will win the election even though New Democracy has as much blood on its hands as does PASOK, as the parties have taken turns over the last 30 years packing public payrolls with political hires in return for votes, creating a top-heavy ship of state, and once he takes power he'll find he's the new Captain of the Titanic because the last one jumped ship. With polls showing New Democracy has only 31 percent of the vote – although with 35 percent saying they'll abstain that means it only really has about 20 percent, so one Greek in five voters still believes in the Big Liars, and they will deserve what they get – which will be more of the pay cuts, tax hikes, slashed pensions, and layoffs that Samaras said he was dead set against when Papandreou was in power.

Samaras held up the second deal with the Troika by refusing to sign a commitment earlier but now that he smells blood he sent them a written confirmation this time faster than you could say I'll-Bet-the-Bank-Against-Greece. As Woody Allen showed years ago in his movie <Bananas>, rebel leaders become just like everyone else when they assume power so Greeks will get more of the same and will have lost all rights to complain, protest, riot or strike because it will be their fault.

That assumes, of course, that Samaras will even be able to form a government since he won't control the Parliament, and means he'll either have to form a coalition or call elections again – which he would win with even less of the vote which means he'd either have to form a coalition or call elections again, which …. well, you see where this is going and if it keeps up they'll have to reserve a bunk in the nuthouse for Samaras where he and Papandreou can be roommates again.

Here's the problem for Samaras. With PASOK falling from 47 percent support in two years to 8 – and sliding toward oblivion – the anti-Socialists wouldn't have enough seats in Parliament to join with New Democracy and give the coalition a majority, so Samaras will have to ask others to join. The Democratic Left, really just an offshoot of PASOK, is second in the polls and a likely candidate, but if that falls apart Samaras will be running around looking to plug the holes in the ship. The deconstruction of Greece has people so crazy that they are looking for any alternative to the criminals who have destroyed their country and some two dozen new political parties have formed but together couldn't get two percent of the vote. PASOK is now running fifth, even behind the Communists and only three points ahead of the certifiable loonies of Golden Dawn, the neo-Nazi cuckoos to the right of Attila the Hun whose manifesto is to run everyone out of Greece who can't prove they are a direct descendant of Pericles, which would be all of them so they'd better watch out what they're asking for.

Chaos, of course, is a Greek word, like so many others in English, and Greek is still a rich language even if the country that created it is not. At this point, Greece needs a miracle as a World Bank official said the country will suffer the worst depression in the world since World War II, although no politician or the rich will be affected, so let's just schedule the elections for April 15 – Easter – and pray for a resurrection.

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A Candidate's Religious Beliefs Absolutely Do Matter



by CONSTANTINOS E. SCAROS

Special to The National Herald

The big story surrounding the Republican presidential debates in Florida was that after seeming to be no match for Newt Gingrich in South Carolina, Mitt Romney turned in two very solid debate performances – his best of the campaign thus far – that propelled him to victory in the Sunshine State. A potentially more significant but less recounted incident, however, touched upon Gingrich's and Romney's religious differences and the larger question of whether a candidate's faith ought to matter.

In discussing a hypothetical scenario in which, as president, he receives a 3AM call stating that Cuban dictator Fidel Castro has died, Romney said that he would "thank Heavens that Fidel Castro has returned to his maker and will be sent to another land." Gingrich, in response, drew a contrast to Romney's answer: "I don't think Fidel is going to meet his maker, I think he's going to the other place." The exchange might have been subtle, but the differences between Mormonism and Catholicism, Romney's and Gingrich's respective denominations, are profound.

Mormons believe that we are all born to Heavenly parents before we choose to come to Earth, and so with rare exception we will all return to some Heavenly tier when we are done here – and that probably includes Fidel Castro, Osama bin Laden, and Hitler. Catholics, on the other hand, believe that good people go to Heaven and bad people – presumably including Castro – go to Hell.

Although there is no apparent reason to conclude that either of those particular belief systems ought to be a factor in determining either candidate's qualifications for office, the possibility that other belief systems might render a political hopeful unelectable is a valid concern.

What if a candidate's religion professed that Americans are God's chosen people and that the highest honor they can bestow upon their creator is to die in battle for their country – might that person as commander-in-chief be more likely to commit American troops to combat?

Or, just as the Bible proclaims Israelites to be God's chosen people, what if another religion's set of doctrines dictated that Satan's chosen lot are the Chinese, or the French, or the Germans, or the Russians…? Is it possible that a president who ascribes to that faith might have a particular bias against any of those countries or American citizens of that descent?

Article VI Sec. 3 of the U.S. Constitution clearly states that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office. That means a candidate cannot be legally disqualified from seeking office based on religion, but it does not mean that the voters should not evaluate that person's religion as part of making an informed decision regarding his or her fitness to serve.

Although it does not appear that 2012 will be a year in which a presidential candidate's religion ought to matter – as there is no plausible reason to believe that Gingrich's Catholicism, Romney's Mormonism, or President Obama's nondenominational Christianity would affect any of them in terms of his ability to carry out his presidential duties effectively – it certainly could become an issue in the future.

Unlike the color of a person's eyes, hair, or skin, or whether the individual comes from Angolan, Ecuadorian, or Italian roots, or prefers hamburgers to hot dogs, religion is about a person's core beliefs, often instilled during the critical formative years by parents, and reinforced by family, friends, and places of worship. Accordingly, categorically deeming religion irrelevant in deciding among various candidates anyplace, anytime is quite often a knee-jerk kowtow to political correctness, and is completely at odds with reasonably and responsibly exercising one's right to vote.







Mitt Romney (Mormon) and Newt Gingrich (Catholic) are challenging Barack Obama (non-denominational Christian) for the presidency of the United States.

2012 Presidential Race - Update

By Constantinos E. Scaros

It was a weekend of political beauty contests, and Mitt Romney took home the blue ribbon. He won the symbolic Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) straw poll, and then beat Ron Paul in Maine - where Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich, who finished third and fourth, respectively, weren't even on the ballot – with no actual delegates at stake. Predictably, the uber-dramatic media exaggerated that bit of non-news.

Santorum clearly got a bounce, though, and time in the spotlight. Having described himself as the candidate the girls don't go wild over but ultimately wind up marrying, will America say "I do" now that Santorum has proposed?

And speaking of mating rituals, Romney has become the date who is not appealing enough to fall head over heels for, but has just enough potential to keep around and run back to every time a more promising courtship crashes and burns. No wonder he can't even get to 50% approval among his own party's voters.

Up next: A debate on Wednesday in Arizona, ahead of that state's and Michigan's Feb. 28 primaries. Stay tuned!

Athens' Cherished Movie Houses: Charred, but Rare

By Angelike Contis
TNH Staff

A candlelight vigil was held outside of the Attikon cinema on Stadiou Street in Athens on Monday night. Although I don't know the cultural group that organized the event, I do know the historic cinema, and the images of flames lapping its grandiose structure was horrifying.

For at least a few hours after the expected chaos broke out on Athens' streets, after the country's leaders said "yes" to unpopular austerity, cinema lovers in Athens shed a few tears. For at least a few hours after the protests, people thought they were saying goodbye to not only the Attikon and the Apollon cinemas housed in the 19th Century neoclassical Ernst Ziller building, but also to the Asty cinema down the street in Korai square.

Greek movie buffs – whose numbers are far greater than domestic Molotov cocktail-throwers – were devastated. We were ready to don black for the cinemas whose presence dates back to the 1920s and 1930s.

Then, within hours, the reports came that – as in a Hollywood script – all three cinemas were spared. Though the building housing them was seriously damaged, the Attikon and Apollon movie theaters were saved. And though Starbucks above it may have sizzled, the Asty suffered only floor damage and electrical repairs. Already, it was featuring Finnish director Aki Kaurismaki's latest work.

But no one was cracking out the champagne. "Who cares about cinemas or landmarks at a time like this?" said cynical voices. "It hardly matters when Greece's politicians have destined the country to a slow, painful, public death." As a young film critic pointed out, "Buildings can be rebuilt, but our lives can't."

I disagree. I think the torching of the cinemas is very important, even now.

For one, it is aesthetically criminal to destroy some of the few non-eye sores in Modern Athens. Beyond that, cinemas are a place of escape, of dreams of romance. Why should Athenians – especially in hard times – be deprived of that?

Art, nostalgia, history, has a value, even if the anarchists or European financiers can't put a price tag on it. For a while there it seemed we would never again be able to fight through crowds of bubbling filmgoers to attend sold-out Athens International Film Festival events at the Attikon or Apollon. Or stare up at the Attikon's illuminated ceiling.

> The Attikon and the Apollon, heralded Athenian cinemas, were damaged by the rioters' fires, but remain standing

Or to contemplate the famous actors painted on the Apollon's walls. Or to meet friends outside and descend into the Asty's cozy, column-covered cinema?

Clearly those who torched the cinemas – and fanned their flames – valued all that at 3 drachmas. Or worse yet, in their minds, they were the heroes of some inane, shoot-em-up multiplex blockbuster.

Film critic Akis Kapranos – who didn't ignore that Athenians are more fed up than ever by the injustices around them – likened the cinema-burners to book-burners and worse, Nazis.

On Sunday, added to the economic tragedy unfolding, lives could easily have been lost on the streets. The Apollon, the Attikon, and the Asty could have been another Marfin Bank, where people died.

People were inside at least one of the buildings while pyromaniacs delighted. Asty owner George Stergiakis told me, "We were all down there." Even with the flames destroying the coffee shop upstairs? Yes. "It was dangerous, but we stayed because we had to save the cinema," he said. Worse yet, apparently there were threats. The Stergiakis family, who has for years fought to keep showing arthouse films in an age of multiplexes reportedly told radio station 9.84: "people wearing hoods came down and asked us for money in order not to burn down our business. And the police were nowhere to be found."

You couldn't find a spookier image if it were the plot of the latest horror film.

Modern Greece Seems to be Out of Touch with Hellenism's Hierarchy of Needs



by Christopher TRIPOULAS

Special to The National Herald

The hierarchy with which every society chooses to organize and structure its needs is indicative of its priorities. This appears in many forms, like its organizational structure, architecture and monuments, educational system, economic structure, modes of recreation, etc.

For example, someone studying Classical Greece – Ancient Athens in particular – might be very interested to note that although that particular society clearly possessed a vast technological knowhow and ability to build exquisite architectural structures and artistic masterpieces, the everyday citizens lived in small, relatively shabby housing. Based on the affluence of the city and its accomplishments, it is rather obvious that the citizens of Ancient Athens could have lived in better homes if they had so chosen. Therefore, the conclusion many scholars draw is that they did not want to. But living in large, luxurious homes was not a priority for the average citizen of Ancient Athens. It was not high on their hierarchy of needs. Most people spent the majority of their day outside of their homes, interacting with others at the agora or engaged in civic activity. Thus, building beautiful common areas that could be shared by all the citizens to "communicate and reveal the truth" was of far greater importance than building… the biggest house on the block.

Even during times of decline, when Greece was conquered by foreign invaders, its society still managed to maintain a unique hierarchy of needs that separated it and kept it from being overrun by its oppressors. The details surrounding that hierarchy might be minute, like the intricacy of a hand-woven garment or the skill of a carefully crafted household item, the icon shelf located in every home or the candle that burned ceaselessly next to it, or they could be more pronounced, like the secret schools that were held at night to teach young children to read and write in Greek during the darkest days of Ottoman rule, or the system of community self-governance which enabled Greeks to administer to their own needs even though they were living under an oppressive foreign regime.

During today's general period of decline of Hellenism, one looks for similar signs that this unique hierarchy of needs is still at work safeguarding the Greek identity. One would be hard pressed to find them in official institutions or large organizations, however. Whether in Greece or abroad, the present-day hierarchy of needs reveals some bitter truths that should not be overlooked. It stands as the measure by which leaders' true intentions are measured and sieved from their mere words.

Despite the endless talk of reforms and wishful thinking, that the present-day crisis might be an opportunity for the country to reorganize its dilapidated political system, nothing could be further from the truth. Despite the ease with which government officials pass all sorts of reforms and laws heaping new and ever more unbearable financial burdens on the people, there seems to be a stubborn unwillingness to simplify any of the arcane laws and cut through the bureaucratic red tape. Greece's politicians, who so willingly offer "earth and water" to those international gangsters billed as their saviors and the greedy bankers who back them, refuse to even budge one inch to make the average citizen's life a little bit easier by reducing the paperwork associated with just about every act in Greece.

There was a news article last month detailing how a would-be farmer needed 18 certificates(!) from Greek agencies just to "get his own little corral to put his cows." Meanwhile, over the past two years, despite the fact that myriads of people have lost their jobs and just as many are going hungry due to the endless austerity measures, the Greek government bloated itself even further by setting up 41 general and special secretariats, legal entities, and independent agencies – all of which have high-paid directors draining the country's coffers and coming up with new ways to exasperate citizens with bureaucracy while the working class sink further into poverty.

The disconnect between the government and the people is obvious, with the former placing its interests well above those of the latter.

The same test could be applied to the institutions of the Greek Diaspora. The Church, for instance, incessantly repeats its mantra about stewardship, which goes to support some hazy national ministries which have seemingly little to do with the everyday needs of the people. Meanwhile, educationally, schools are closing and philanthropically, there has still not been any meaningful help provided by the Greek Diaspora to the Greek people who are living a modern-day tragedy.

Of course, the onus to act is not only on the Church. Societies and other national organizations have been eerily silent as well. Federations of Greek Societies that organize annual Greek parades and typically give the annual spiel about the importance of Greek education will once again let the children of the community march last. Indeed, here is one small and easy way to bring about a change in mentality. At this year's Greek parade, let all the communities operating day schools march first as a sign of solidarity and a symbolic indication that Greek education really does come first in the eyes of our local institutions.

Before we point out the shortcomings in Greece, we would do well to tackle some of our own.

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