

The National Herald

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Investments and reality

For 17 years Capital Link has organized and presented – at the beginning of December – a useful, large-scale and multifaceted forum that focuses on investments in Greece.

The attendance at this year's forum, held once more at the prestigious Metropolitan Club, was unprecedented.

The number of attendees, however, is not the only important aspect of the event. Their ability to actually invest there is the essential fact.

So, among the forum attendants were major investors, businessmen who were looking for answers to the big question – what does the future hold for the Greek economy and thus for their potential investments?

Greece, as was the case in past years, realized the importance of this forum and wanted to use it to its advantage.

They wished to make the most of the very good opportunity that Capital Link provided to present to the participants a positive picture of the state of the country, as well as its plans for the future.

This is obviously what the prime minister of the country wanted to do, who – as former prime minister Antonis Samaras did last year – communicated with the participants via a videotaped message.

Another impressive thing about the forum was that the representatives of the troika also participated electronically, underscoring the significance they attribute to investments for Greece.

Of course, an investment is no simple matter.

We are not talking about charity. It is based on a rational analysis of the financial as well as of the political situation.

It is based on the existing business climate.

It is not, therefore, a random occurrence that one country attracts investments and another does not.

Senior officials of the Greek Government have been known to make the naive request that Greek-Americans invest in Greece for patriotic reasons.

If that were the way things worked, the businessmen inside Greece could set a good example by making their own investments there, and then the Greeks abroad could follow. So, why don't they do that?

Actually, quite a number of Greek-Americans had attempted in the past to invest there, and in the end – disillusioned by the prevailing bureaucratic incompetence and corruption – they gave up.

Some did invest for emotional reasons – and they lost everything.

Nicolas Bornozis, president of Capital Link, and his sister Olga Bornozis, are performing a great and essential service by organizing this forum in New York. They are the ones “bringing the horse to water.”

But they cannot force it to drink.

The ability of the delegation to persuade the businessmen does not depend on the number of people that make up the delegation, or their degree of preparation or lack thereof. Neither is it based on the image they present, which sometimes verge on the delusional.

It all depends on the actual conditions in the country.

Those, unfortunately, are still a long way from being good.

Let their children forgive us

At 29th Street and 36th Avenue in Astoria there is a humble place of prayer for the Muslims. Queens and Astoria in particular in recent years have drawn thousands of Muslims.

According to the 2014 census there about 60,000 Muslims, from different countries, living there.

On a recent day, outside on the sidewalk, could be heard, more or less clearly, the imam who was either invoking a prayer or preaching.

Hurried men, most of them young, dressed distinctly, were entering their place of worship in the middle of the day. They took off their shoes and walked into the room inside.

All of them were men. I approached someone who was coming out of the building.

“May I ask you something?” I said to him.

He looked at me strangely. Rather suspiciously. He probably took me for a spy. Not such a crazy idea nowadays. “Yes,” he answered.

“How do you feel about Donald Trump's statements about banning Muslims from entering the country? What do you say amongst yourselves?” I asked him.

“It hurts us” he responded. “Just because there are some Muslims that do all these things, it does not mean that we are all terrorists.”

“Are Americans looking at you strangely? I pressed?”

“Most of them, no. There some though, yes, that look at us strangely,” he responds.

“Does it bother you?”

“Of course it bothers us.”

“Are you scared?”

“No, we're not scared. Trump made us feel bad. But there are a lot of people condemning him. What I am afraid of,” he continued, “is the effect on my children. Yesterday they told me that they are being bothered at school. I don't know what they are thinking. Also, we have relatives calling us on the phone and asking if we are ok, whether we are going to return to our country.”

“Where are you from?”

“From Pakistan” he responds. “And you?” he asked.

“From Greece,” I tell him.

“Oh, you have your problems too,” he says to me.

I left but my thoughts lingered on the sad face of this unknown new “friend” of mine.

But I was mainly thinking about the story of our own community's immigration. The time when our ancestors would wear their traditional “foustanelia” (the many-pleated short white skirt) and the “locals” went after them as inappropriate for the country.

How many tears did they shed? I can imagine the disappointment they felt about the “promised land” in which they thought they had arrived.

America is not the place described by the ruthless Mr. Trump. Those are not its principles and its values. He is doing this country a great injustice. And he is damaging it by justifying the propaganda of the terrorists that America has declared war against them. He is making the recruiting job of the terrorists easier.

Above all, though, let the children of my interlocutor friend and the others forgive us, who, as children, they bear the biggest burden of the discrimination against them.

Merry Christmas to TNH Staff and Contributors

To the Editor:

The National Herald continues to provide us readers with excellent coverage of Greek-American events – even some more outside of New York – and the news from Greece and Cyprus, which I appreciate, but what I look forward to every week are the special sections. I'm not a crossword maven, but I try to get to them as often as possible. They keep my history and current events and vocabulary brain cells sharp.

Kiki Sembos keeps my funny

TO OUR READERS

The National Herald welcomes letters from its readers intended for publication. They should include the writer's name, address, and telephone number and be addressed to: The Editor, The National Herald, 37-10 30th Street, Long Island City, NY 11101. Letters can also be faxed to (718) 472-0510 or e-mailed to scaros@thenationalherald.com. We reserve the right to edit letters for publication and regret that we are unable to acknowledge or return those left unpublished.

bone well-oiled. Week after week of delightful stories that remind me of my dear aunts and uncles - memorable ladies, gentlemen and shrewd character keeping each other on their toes and us in stitches.

And what can I say about the inimitable and irreplaceable Steve Frangos? Keeping us in touch with the stories of our forebears here in America is a vital service. I am a fluent Greek speaker, but I am sure there are many people, young and old, who value Our Everyday Greek by Dr. Dimitra Kamarinou. Not all of us were able to attend Greek school or were lucky enough to have many years with Yiayia and Pappou to learn Greek – standard and with those wonderful regional accents – but that column gives many Greek-Americans, young and old, a fresh start and prepares them for their next trip to the homeland.

But I have saved the best and most delicious for last. I am a pretty good cook, blessed with recipes passed down through generations of friends and families, but I really enjoy reading – and creating – the recipes from Eleni Sakellis and others. I use them throughout the year, but they are especially welcome during the holidays.

On that note, I send a big holiday thank you to everyone at our National Herald and wish you and your families a Merry

Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Anne Papacostas
Chicago, IL

One More Last Chance?

While the economic situation in Greece is not getting any better - it's actually getting worse – the political situation is itself not far from unraveling. In fact there are quite a few signs that there is a lot of activity going on behind the scenes to bring about a change. This is probably a result of the deepening realization that on the one hand the

government is incapable of governing while the main opposition party, New Democracy, seems to be close to breaking up. Speaking of ND, it is holding elections this coming Sunday to choose a new leader. The only way to be able to move forward is to elect a new, American-educated person with private sector working experience as its leader. His name is Kyriakos Mitsotakis. He is not your typical dynasty politician and if they miss this chance both the party and the country will have made one more serious mistake.

Antonios Filikios
Manhattan



GEORGE SARAFOGLU / SPECIAL TO THE NATIONAL HERALD

COMMENTARY

FIR Greece: Hot Zone Rules of Engagement with Turkey

By **Manos Drakonakis**

After September 11, 2001, an unknown aircraft entered the Flight Information Region (FIR) of Greece, flying over Amvrakikos Kolpos in Aitolokarnania, approaching from the western side.

The alarm from the Greece's defense department reached the desk of the prime minister, who then had the authority of downing the unknown plane

characterized in official military terms as “zombie.” The plane was finally identified as a Cyprus commercial aircraft and was permitted to continue its flight path.

Every aircraft entering the Greek airspace has a prior flight plan declared to the Greek Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA); it gives signals for recognition and it is also present on international VHF frequencies to avoid collision in the air, for example. In other cases, the surveillance system will pass on the alarm to the National Operations Centre (NOC) and the Greek Air Defense System (GADS) will activate the air missiles while the intercept planes take off. In crisis time, the decision to push

the red button is assigned to the lower levels of command for actions to be immediate, as time is critical.

There is absolutely no chance that GADS will not know the identity of a Turkish warplane, which is visible on radars from the moment it takes off from a Turkish base. Especially if a fighter is flying in a war zone, like the Russian one that took off from a base in Syria and was shot down by the Turkish ground missiles last November, it will be followed by the radars throughout its flight.

The electronic traces of any intruder in the Greek airspace are recorded on the radar's map and will prove any violation beyond any doubt. The Greek Air Force follows something called “Renegade Procedure” when there is a violation of the FIR: The Greek fighters will then approach the enemy aircraft, one of them will be on its tail ready for action. They will first try to communicate with the pilot by radio. If they get no response, they will make visual signals by waving their wings until they receive back the same signal. That is in case the aircraft controls have failed and the flight

crew cannot declare a state of emergency. Then the Greek fighters will lead their fellow pilot to the nearest airport for emergency landing. It is also important that all the warplanes are always flying in pairs to back up each other. This rule which has rare exceptions raises questions about the Russian warplane that was spotted flying alone in supposed Turkish airspace.

The Rules of Engagement are followed by all kinds of armed forces. According to the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is responsible for the defense of Europe while the European Union (EU) is responsible for keeping the peace in European Territory. NATO has its own Rules of Engagement and in case of crisis between country members it will intervene discreetly.

How about common European borders then? Here, politics and diplomacy get in the way. And as a matter of fact, there is no actual common European policy in defense. Recently, a representative of the German Government supported the idea of European watch of

the EU borders.

Greek Armed Forces never overreact. They contribute to the de-escalation of any dangerous international crisis above the Aegean. They will avoid conflict

unless absolutely necessary, as they do not wish casualties on any side

and they will not risk any damage of their equipment that costs billions to Greek taxpayers. Tourism is also the Country's main source of income and that is another reason for avoiding trouble by all means.

So why anyone would fire a missile and shoot down an aircraft supposed to have infiltrated the country's airspace if this will mean loss of tourism profits next summer season? Sometimes, there are more profitable reasons such as the oil of Northern Iraq or Syria, where the Kurds are fighting for an independent state within these areas in conflict.

Manos Drakonakis, who lives in Athens, is a writer and an airport agent trained in detecting forged passports, visas, and other travel documents.

As We Ponder Solutions to “A Simple Twist of Fate”

By **Nikolaos Piperis**

While Bob Dylan's haunting harmonica solo in “Simple Twist of Fate” filled my headphones as we drove away from the occupied area, the impact of one simple twist of fate—the invasion of Cyprus in 1974—felt eerily palpable.

Here we were last summer: young Hellenic Americans, despite being born decades after the invasion, filling our rickety bus with a weary silence. The stoic gazes out the windows reflected the sites we flew by: desecrated churches, abandoned neighborhoods and a smirking Sofia Vergara gazing down upon smashed cemetery headstones from a billboard.

The eeriest aspect of the occupied area, though, is the amnesia that fills its air. The massive sprawl of gas stations, construction sites and chain restaurants has no memory of a time before propaganda adorned the age-old mountains of Cyprus—as if whitewashed flats and car dealerships could drown out both the glories and terrors that still echo in the corners of the island's history.

This amnesia was no more apparent than at the beach at Famagusta, where carefree children basked in the June sun under the dark loom of the city's decrepit skyline, still untouched since Turkish forces stormed the tourist hub in 1974.

As I watched families do what families do on the beach—swimming, laughing, enjoying lunch together—I wondered, do they find this scene as unsettling as I do?

Do the screams of scores of innocent islanders, still ringing out through the cracked windows and barbed wire fence surrounding the abandoned city, fill their ears, as they do mine?

But how could they? These children, I realized, knew not-

ing different. Generations removed from the invasion and the early flood of settlers from Turkey, they simply lived amidst the amnesia—it defined their home, their personal histories, their entire understanding of their community.

Scenes like Famagusta reinforce what the United States Ambassador John Koenig told us personally: that Cyprus' past is indeed defined by tragedy, but that the time has come to move on.

Are we part of the problem, rather than a part of the solution?

Yes, injustice has festered across the island for the past forty-one years, but the fundamental nature of the situation is not justice: it is compromise. The two established communities, Koenig reiterated, must put calls for justice aside in order to spare the coming generations from the divisions of the past. Famagusta is now the home of those Turkish children, and the terrifying echoes of the past that haunt their community ought to be muted once and for all.

Koenig's stance is not unreasonable, and I never doubted that it came from a strong desire to forge a lasting solution to the Cyprus problem. In fact, it was similar to how Bob Dylan described failed romance to me through my headphones.

“Blame it on a simple twist of fate,” he nostalgically crooned, explaining that the vagaries of life often leave us with no choice but to accept them—that fate renders us powerless, and our ability to handle this reality lies in acceptance.

That 1974 was a simple, horrifying twist of fate, and that viewing it as such—as a cruel

event that can never be undone, and ought to be placed permanently in the past—would allow for greater happiness in the future.

Are we, then, destined to listen to Koenig? Should organizations like the American Hellenic Institute not take groups like ours to the island, showing the next generation firsthand the injustices that define its northern third? Are we part of the problem, rather than a part of the solution?

According to Koenig, we are part of the problem—to him, men like AHI President Nick Larigakis are firebrands, reopening old wounds and neglecting United States interests in the region.

But what Koenig and far too many nations in the West fail to realize is that the fundamental nature of the Cyprus issue is justice; and by neglecting justice, we jeopardize both United States interests and the legitimacy of international law in the region.

By failing to take a definitive stand on the illegality of the Turkish invasion and the countless atrocities committed by the occupying military forces, the United States is actively defying its creed, as expressed by Thomas Jefferson in his second inaugural address:

“We are firmly convinced, and we act on that conviction,” Jefferson said to the young nation in 1805, “that with nations, as with individuals, our interests

soundly calculated, will ever be found inseparable from our moral duties.”

Jefferson understood that justice in all forms always benefited the United States, regardless of the pressures or fears that often come with its enforcement—that our basic moral responsibility to address injustice must be the core tenet of our foreign policy. That discouraging young Americans from calling for justice and urging them to place interests above our moral duties—serves to destroy the integrity of the nation, both at home and abroad; and that, again, in Jefferson's words, “history bears witness to the fact that a just nation is taken on its word.”

It is our responsibility, then, to not allow what happened in Cyprus to go down in history as a simple twist of cruel fate. By tolerating injustice, we are not simply depriving the island of the peace it deserves, but cowering in the face of our moral duties as Americans.

That, above all, is what I had the privilege of learning through the American Hellenic Institute.

Niko Piperis is a junior from Omaha, Nebraska pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Philosophy at Boston College. Niko participated in the seventh annual American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) Foreign Policy College Student Trip to Greece and Cyprus.

CORRECTION:

Re: “HMS Honors Jaharis, Soterakis, Harovas” (Dec. 12), Dr. Antoine Harovas' wife is named Euterpe and their children are Anna, Lea, and Stephanie.
Also, the late Dr. Harovas' biography was read by his son-in-law, Dr. John Bendo, not by Dr. Theo Dibaktan.