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Greece: A wounded country and civilization

By E.G. Vallianatos

I was in Greece for most of March and early April 2005. With spring in the air, the country, save Athens, was beautiful with wildflowers. The metro and the new travel improvements made possible because of the 2004 Olympics help, but do not diminish the feeling one is choked for space, trees and nature, which has all but disappeared in Athens.

I also traveled to Kephallonia, my home. I walked for hours in the thick forest of Mt. Ainos, the black mountain where the ancient Kephallonian Greeks worshipped Zeus. Yet even in this legally protected ecosystem, I could see the footprint of the shepherds who use the mountain as a private ranch for their flocks of sheep and goats. The Greek forest service has all but four guards for Kephallonia and the next-door island, Ithake. These guards are suing the shepherds, but the penalties don't seem to matter.

In addition, the former socialist government started undoing the legal protection of Ainos in order to convert this rare forest into a tourist trap. The New Democracy government, following the anti-nature policies of its predecessor, has already left ugly reminders in what is to come in the destructive expansion of the roads within the protective corridor of the mountain.

Greece is always hurting me. It's a country full of tragedy. Its fantastic ancient civilization, which gave light to the West, stands alone because Greece remains outside the cultural borders of the West. Having never had a Renaissance, Greece is behaving more like an Oriental religious despotism, allowing its clergy a license for power and corruption reminiscent of the dark ages. The result of having a Christian theocracy in Greece is that the country is paying little attention to its Greek history and cultural treasures. Everything is made from a foreign model -- and in a hurry. Its Christian population has yet to understand its pre-Christian Hellenic achievement. Rather, it strives to emulate its European neighbors and the United States, barely tolerating its antiquities.

However, the Greek state has stocked its museums with the ruins of ancient Greek art and sculpture for the benefit of foreigners who visit Greece

precisely because of those ruins and because ancient Greece created Western civilization, details that escape Christian Greeks.

Meanwhile, the Greek state, remaining aloof to corruption and to the country's cultural crisis, it is siding with a former Yugoslav province, which insists its real name is "Macedonia." The Greek state also maintains its pro-Turkish policy while Turkish warplanes keep violating Greek air space in the Aegean. In addition, Greece is urging its European Union colleagues to welcome Turkey to their exclusive club.

How can anyone explain such a policy? Turkey has been the worst enemy Greece has ever had, and, yet, the leaders of Greece, blindly, want to go to bed with people who degraded their country for centuries, bringing gifts to their assassins. It's not that Greece ought to never be a friend of Turkey. But two people or countries must like each other and be mutually respectful for friendship to flourish. With Turkey it's perpetual killing and animosity and insults, starting with the genocide of the Greeks in the early twentieth century, the murder of Smyrna in 1922, the pogroms of the Greeks in Constantinople in the 1950s, and the invasion and conquest of a third of Cyprus in 1974. In addition, Turkey is interfering in Greek internal affairs in Thrace. So unless and until Turkey learns to behave with respect towards Greece, Greece ought to treat Turkey like an enemy, which makes even more puzzling the pro-Turkish Greek policy.

Is the United States behind such a reckless Greek decision that, in the long term, could translate into another Turkish-dominated Greece? Imagine, if you can, not merely a huge influx of countless Turks into Greece – through the doors of the European Union -- but seeing, once again, minarets and all the Oriental baggage of Asians all over the country? America could probably tolerate such multiculturalism for a time, but it would choke Greece to death, even Christian Greece. To complicate matters further, in the early 2005 the president of the Greek parliament issued a cryptic message to the new president of Greece, saying he ought to prepare himself for shrinking Greek borders in the near future! Did she mean Turkey grabbing part of the Aegean?

So what are we to understand from this gathering storm? What is the Greek governing class telling us with these anti-Greek policies?

The greatest strength of Greece is her past contributions to Western civilization. Without Hellas barbarism would continue to be the arbiter in world affairs. So the reality hits home with the present version of Hellas, Christian Greece, being far removed from its Hellenic roots. As long as Greece allows Christianity to control, erase or suppress her Hellenic nature, the country remains a palimpsest, carrying a foreign message over Hellenic culture, which Christianity scratched away. The current corruption in the bowels of Christianity is a symptom that Christianity is continuing with its destructive work in the country, taking away Greece's material and spiritual wealth, withdrawing land from cultivation, and dividing the people against each other.

Time has come for Philhellenes and Greeks to come to the aid of a wounded country, helping her to recover her Hellenic spirit so evident in the opening ceremony of the 2004 Athens Olympics. Only then Greece will be in a position to claim its dignity and hegemony, putting the church in its place, and saying no to the Slavs trying to legitimize their stolen Greek cultural property in the name of Macedonia. Finally, a proud Greece that knows herself ought to be able to stand up for her sovereignty, ending any Turkish privileges she has granted to the Turks living in Thrace, and shooting down any Turkish aircraft violating her Aegean air space.

E.G. Vallianatos is a writer with a doctorate in Greek history. His forthcoming book is "This land is their land: How corporate farms threaten the world."