

HISTORY NEITHER FORGIVES, NOR FORGETS

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"A person who is respectful towards his land, civilization and language, attains greatness and he acquires all the happiness of life. His deeds should be such that makes the motherland, the culture and language proud."

From Rig Veda, an ancient Indian sacred collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns

One of the most glaring symptoms of a nation's decomposition is separating its past from its present. So-called "modernizers" are the worst culprits in this respect. In Greece, "modernizers" have done immense damage to the collective memory of the country since the restoration of parliamentary rule in 1974.

Using various pretexts -- anything from invoking "EU trends" to claiming the need to "respect the other" to exorcising "virulent nationalism" -- those who would rather see recent, but also the more distant, history of Greece sent directly to the dustbin, only to be replaced by an amorphous lump of politically correct, saccharin-reinforced pancakes, have placed themselves strategically in government, politics, the arts, and what is still identified in this country as "education."

The result has been devastating. The younger generations are largely ignorant of the sacrifices and deprivations of their immediate ancestors and the battles they had to fight and win in order to keep this country intact. People in their twenties and thirties today have little, if any, real understanding of such turning points in Modern Greek History as the Macedonian Struggle, the Balkan Wars, the Asia Minor Catastrophe, and the Nazi Occupation. Even the Greek War of Independence is reluctantly approached by the "modernizers" and has been subject to corrective "new research" that inquires into the "social conflicts," supposedly underlying the rising against the Ottoman Turk occupier, as key forces in shaping revolutionary aims.

In the background of all these historical twists looms the "pragmatic" interpretation of historical events bend on debunking "nationalist myths" in the interest of "honest, modern relations" with friends and foes -- the latter now promoted to rather more innocuous "competitors" in a supposedly level field underpinned by broader "common interests."

This hold-hands-be-together-give-peace-a-chance newfangled practice leads to some deeply disturbing "edited versions" of what has befallen Greece in the not-too-distant past: a Greek history book that was scheduled for release *to all of the country's secondary schools* a couple of years ago described the nightmarish last hours of the Greek population of Smyrna, while the city went up in flames in September 1922, as a "congestion" on the piers to board ships and get away from certain death under the Turkish knife. The book was eventually withdrawn, after a major public outcry, but the incident went down ... in the books as a poignant demonstration of "new research" and how our left-wing "intelligentsia" perceives holocausts like the one in 1922 Smyrna, which was described by no other than Sir Winston Churchill as "the great massacre of [the city's] Christian population" by Kemal's troops.

Deliberately ignoring or, even worse, tweaking with History in the name of nebulous "stability"

political philosophies (not to mention “improvement” in bilateral relations) is a clear sign of abandoning one’s own tradition, cultural heritage, and sense of national continuity.

Post-junta Greece has been champion in this regard. Unlike in most of our European partner countries (not to mention Turkey) national anniversaries and commemorations of momentous historical events are either observed in the most lukewarm, dyspeptic, boilerplate fashion *or not observed at all*. Only too recently, a Greek prime minister was prominent in his allergic reaction to participating in such national commemorations or making himself available for anything that involved paying homage to veterans and the forgotten battles of the Nation.

Losing one’s own History is an irreversible catastrophe. Especially in an era of overwhelming mass communication and nonstop distractions short-circuiting attention span, letting historical memories, and the sense of national identity, lapse cannot be corrected. But History neither forgives, nor forgets. Shoving determining historical traditions and memories aside in favor of temporary ideological and political expediencies saps the collective will, undermines social cohesion, and deprives the polity of guiding beacons that are necessary today more than at any time in the recent past.

In the end, it is a well-defined, strong-rooted *historical culture* that defines the ability of Nations to survive and meet challenges successfully. Greeks make one big fuss about their ancient ancestors, yet are increasingly distant from *the principles, values, and philosophies that drove those long-gone peoples in their striving for excellence*. The price of this abandonment is all too clear around us.

Being a lip service artist is of course cost-free. Getting down to business and completing the task as required isn’t. And this is where today’s “strong” Greece loses at every whistle of the referee.