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UN: Rising mercury emissions increase risk to humans

Developing nations are facing growing health and environmental risks from increased exposure to mercury, according to a UN report. It says a growth in small-scale mining and coal burning are the main reasons for the rise in emissions.

As a result of rapid industrialisation, South-East Asia is the largest regional emitter and accounts for almost half of the element's annual emissions.

The findings appear ahead of a meeting that aims to cut global demand by 2015.

The Global Mercury Assessment 2013, published by the UN Environment Programme (Unep), shows that emissions from small-scale gold mining in Asia, Africa and South America have doubled since 2005.

It states: "Global emissions of mercury to the air in 2010 from human activities were estimated at 1,960 tonnes.

"Although it is difficult to compare emission estimates for individual years, total [emissions from human activities] appear to have been relatively stable from 1990 to 2010."

Globally, the demand for mercury has been steadily falling over the decades, from about 9,000 tonnes per year in the 1960s.

Shifting patterns

However, it adds that there has been a "large shift in regional patterns".

Burning coal is another major source of mercury emissions, the report says.

"Economic growth has driven an increase in... emissions in southern and eastern Asia, which now accounts for about half of global emissions," the report explains. "Emissions in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America are slowly rising, while emissions are declining in North America and Europe."

Mercury - a heavy, silvery-white metal - is a liquid at room temperature and can evaporate easily. Within the environment, it is found in cinnabar deposits. It is also found in natural forms in a range of other rocks, including limestone and coal.

Mercury can be released into the environment through a number of industrial processes including mining, metal and cement production and burning fossil fuels. Once emitted, it persists in the environment for a long time - circulating through air, water, soil and living organisms - and can be dispersed over vast distances.

The UN says the global health burden of disease related to mercury is well recognised by governments around the world.

'Highly toxic'

The World Health Organization (WHO) says: "Mercury is highly toxic to human health, posing a particular threat to the development of the (unborn) child and early in life." "The inhalation of mercury vapour can produce harmful effects on the nervous, digestive and immune systems, lungs and kidneys, and may be fatal.

"The inorganic salts of mercury are corrosive to the skin, eyes and gastrointestinal tract, and may induce kidney toxicity if ingested." The Unep assessment says that the concentration of mercury in the top 100m of the world's oceans has doubled over the past century, and estimates that 260 tonnes of the toxic metal has made it way from soil into rivers and lakes.

Another characteristic is that mercury becomes more concentrated as it moves up the food chain, reaching its highest levels in predator fish that may be consumed by humans, the report adds. The authors say that they expect the use of highly toxic method will continue to grow among small-scale miners as the price for gold continues to rise. use mercury in processes that extract gold from other minerals by binding it to the element before burning it off. Low-mercury and mercury-free methods that are available but socio-economic factors often act as barriers to miners adopting these alternative ways to extract gold, the authors add.

Although coal does not often contain high concentrations of mercury, the authors say the "combination of the large volume burned and the fact that a significant portion of the mercury present is emitted into the atmosphere results in large overall emissions from the sector". Soon in Geneva, government officials from more than 100 nations will begin final negotiations to establish the treaty that could lead to a reduction in global mercury demand by 2015.

Cook County, Illinois Treasurer Warns U.S. Homeowners And Retirees Of Local Debt Hazards

Maria Pappas has been Cook County Treasurer since 1998. Her office oversees the finances of the 19th largest government in the United States and collects more than \$11 billion annually from property taxes on 1.8 million parcels. She served two terms as a Cook County Commissioner before becoming Treasurer.

While much public attention is directed to national, state and large-city debt issues, Treasurer Pappas warns homeowners and taxpayers to pay careful attention to mounting local public debt in their communities. She is in a solid position to know, having conducted studies of alarming debt conditions across her county's approximately 2,200 taxing districts.



Larry Bell: Maria, over the course of our conversations, you have shared some very sobering realities and informative insights warranting serious consideration in bond issue voting, municipal investments, and retirement planning decisions. To begin, please give us a big picture of circumstances in your Chicagoland region that offer a general reference to local debt.

Maria Pappas: The picture isn't pretty. Almost everyone's focus is primarily upon finances of the federal or state governments. Few pay attention to local governments.

In May, 2012, the collective debt reported by the local primary taxing agencies in Cook County was more than \$140 billion! To put that in context, the total debt-per-household in the City of Chicago was \$87,720, and \$35,774 in the suburbs. Since local governments cannot print money, they rely on property taxes as their

main revenue source to operate. Homeowners might be able to give their homes to their children, but that future generation won't be able to afford to keep them because of the property taxes, which have doubled over a 10-year period.

Why wasn't all of this bad news known well before you took action? Nobody knew the numbers because local governments don't like to show how badly they are doing!

I got tired of people stopping, calling and writing me with one simple question: "Why are my taxes going up?" So I asked the Cook County Board of Commissioners in 2009 for a "Debt Disclosure Ordinance" authorizing my office to collect all this financial information that would provide the answers. Now, when these local governments report their numbers, taxpayers can easily find them on my website at www.cookcountytreasurer.com.

Maria, in the interest of ensuring agency budgetary transparency and accountability, how does your reporting system work?

It's simple: by the last Tuesday in December, every taxing district uploads its data to a secure website. Voila! The information is immediately available for the public to view. The site enables taxpayers to then "drill down" into each agency listed on the bill.

Visitors can click an icon next to each agency and see budgeted revenues, the amount of money collected from the property owner, outstanding debt (including pensions), the 10-year levy history, and the percentage of levy change over 10 years. Visitors can also click a link to view the Annual Financial Report as provided by each taxing district in PDF format.

In July, 2012, Cook County published the debt information as an insert in several local newspapers. Now, my office is planning on providing financial data directly on the property tax bill so taxpayers can see the figures for the agencies that receive their share of the property tax.

But wouldn't you expect the debt problems revealed in your data to be principally just a big city phenomenon?

Fiscal problems are a problem in every different type of local government: townships, villages, school districts, park districts, fire protection districts, sanitary districts, school districts, libraries and more. Taxpayers are on the hook for the debt that each of these governments continues to amass.

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PUBLISHER
SOTIRIS REKOUMIS
EDITOR
DENISE REKOUMIS
LAYOUTS
JOHN REKOUMIS
CONTRIBUTORS

DR. STAVROS BASSEAS, JOHN REKOUMIS,
DENISE REKOUMIS, DR JORDAN TSOLAKIDIS,
CHRIS MERENTITIS, CHARLES MOURATIDES

THE PLATFORM OF THE GREEK PRESS

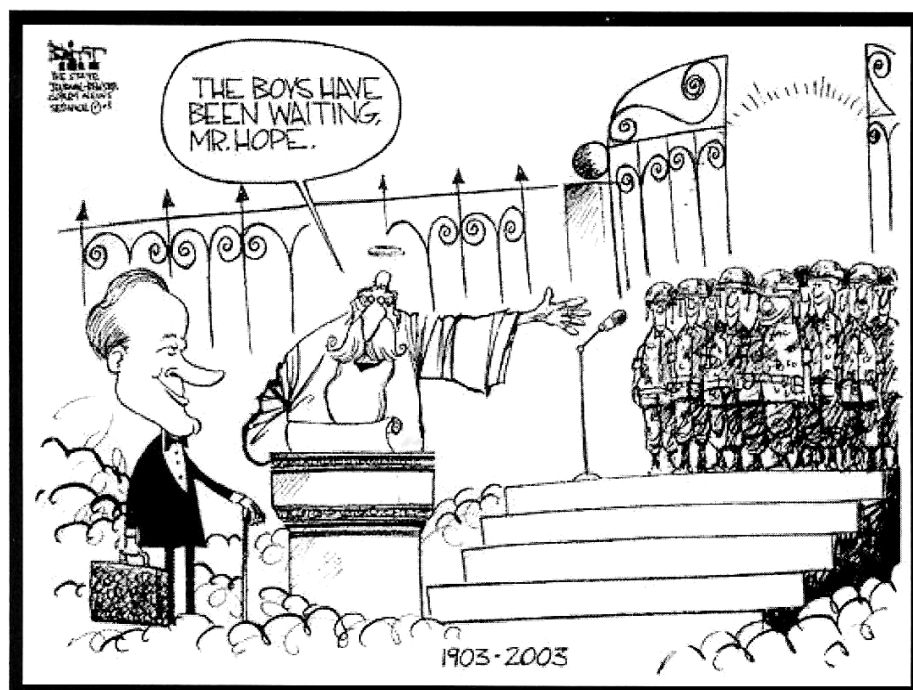
- 1.To applaud the achievements of our ethnic group
- 2.To support the ideas of the Hellenic-Christian tradition
- 3.To promote the preservation of the Greek language
- 4.To encourage all worthy Community causes
- 5 To assist all the Greek-American fraternal, cultural patriotic and religious organizations
- 6.To install Americanism in the Greek-American community
- 7.To advance the just causes of Hellenism.
8. To promote the ideals Greece has given to humanity.

LAW OFFICE OF MARIYANNA SPYROPOULOS



180 N. LASALLE ST.
SUITE 1801
CHICAGO, IL. 60611
PHONE: (312)456-8005
FAX:456-8006

BOB HOPE IN HEAVEN



For those of you too young to remember Bob Hope, ask your Grandparents. And thanks for the memories. Tribute to a man who DID make a difference.

ON TURNING 70 'I still chase women, but only Downhill'. **ON TURNING 80** 'That's the time of your life when even your birthday suit needs pressing.' **ON TURNING 90** 'You know you're getting old when the candles cost more than the cake.' **ON TURNING 100.** 'I don't feel old. In fact, I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap.' **ON GIVING UP HIS EARLY CAREER, BOXING** 'I ruined my hands in the ring. The referee kept stepping on them.' **ON NEVER WINNING AN OSCAR** 'Welcome to the Academy Awards or, as it's called at my home, 'Passover'. **ON GOLF** 'Golf is my profession. Show business is just to pay the green fees.' **ON PRESIDENTS** 'I have performed for 12 presidents and entertained only six.' **ON WHY HE CHOSE SHOWBIZ FOR HIS CAREER** 'When I was born, the doctor said to my mother, Congratulations, you have an eight pound ham. **ON RECEIVING THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL** 'I feel very humble, but I think I have the strength of character to fight it.' **ON HIS FAMILY'S EARLY POVERTY** 'Four of us slept in the one bed. When it got cold, mother threw on another brother.' **ON HIS SIX BROTHERS** 'That's how I learned to dance. Waiting for the bathroom.' **ON HIS EARLY FAILURES** I would not have had anything to eat if it wasn't for the stuff the audience threw at me.' **ON GOING TO HEAVEN** 'I've done benefits for ALL religions. I'd hate to blow the hereafter on a technicality.'

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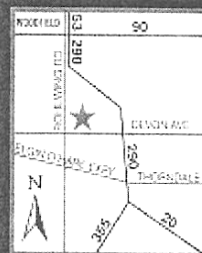
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Niles “New Party” Slate Seeks Reinvigorated Sister Cities Program in Niles



Andrew Przybylo (second from left) current Niles Village Trustee and candi-
date for Mayor, with new members of the Niles Sister Cities Program (left to
right) Hee Kim, Michael Kim, owner of Assi Plaza Food Market and Don Kim

The Niles New Party Slate, Andrew Przybylo for Mayor, George Alpogianis, Danette O’Donovan and John Jekot for Village Trustees have suggested that the Niles Sister Cities Program could become more relevant and more active, especially under a new board that was recently elected. “In recent years some Niles Citizens have questioned the value of the program,” Przybylo said, “and rightfully so.” The recently elected Sister Cities Board is headed by Alpogianis, owner of Kappy’s Restaurant. Alpogianis, who has been a Sister Cities member for 10 years and has chaired the Greek faction for 7 years, agrees with Przyblo that the Sister Cities Program of Niles could better serve the people of Niles with expanded programs.

“We’ve gotten into a rut in the past few years with just doing the same programs year after year,” he said. “Andrew and I have some new ideas we’d like to implement including a Skype Night and a Pen Pal Program.” A Skype Night would allow people from a sister city to meet folks from Niles via a digital audio/video connection. The Pen-Pal program would be for children and Przybylo said they could use a portal on the Village website. Przybylo also added making the Niles Library a partner in the Sister Cities Program to foster literature or art exchange programs.

Przybylo and Alpogianis are also in favor of expanding the Sister Cities Program with new cities and ethnic groups such as German-Americans and Korean-Americans. In fact both of those groups are now represented on the new board.

The current Sister Cities for Niles are Nafleon, Greece, Pisa, Italy, Loxley, Ireland and Limanowa, Poland.

Amazing frozen lemons

All it is.....is a frozen lemon

Many professionals in restaurants and eateries are using or consuming the entire lemon and nothing is wasted. How can you use the whole lemon without waste?

Simple.. place the washed lemon in the freezer section of your refrigerator. Once the lemon is frozen, get your grater, and shred the whole lemon (no need to peel it) and sprinkle it on top of your foods.

Sprinkle it to your vegetable salad, ice cream, soup, cereals, noodles, spaghetti sauce, rice, sushi, fish dishes, whisky.... the list is endless. All of the foods will unexpectedly have a wonderful taste, something that you may have never tasted before. Most likely, you only think of lemon juice and vitamin C. Not anymore. Now that you’ve learned this lemon secret,



you can use lemon even in instant cup noodles.

What’s the major advantage of using the whole lemon other than preventing waste and adding new taste to your dishes? Well, you see lemon peels contain as much as 5 to 10 times more vitamins than the lemon juice itself. And yes, that’s what you’ve been wasting. But from now on, by following this simple procedure of freezing the whole lemon, then grating it on top of your dishes, you can consume all of those nutrients and get even healthier.

It’s also good that lemon peels are health rejuvenators in eradicating toxic elements in the body. So place your washed lemon in your freezer, and then grate it on your meal every day. It is a key to make your foods tastier and you get to live healthier and longer! That’s the lemon secret! Better late than never, right? The surprising benefits of lemon!

Lemon (Citrus) is a miraculous product to kill cancer cells. It is 10,000 times stronger than chemotherapy. Why do we not know about that? Because there are laboratories interested in making a synthetic version that will bring them huge profits.

You can now help a friend in need by letting him/her know that lemon juice is beneficial in preventing the disease. Its taste is pleasant and it does not produce the horrific effects of chemotherapy.

How many people will die while this closely guarded secret is kept, so as not to jeopardize the beneficial multimillionaires large corporations? As you know, the lemon tree is known for its varieties of lemons and limes. You can eat the fruit in different ways: you can eat the pulp, juice press, prepare drinks, sorbets, pastries, etc...

It is credited with many virtues, but the most interesting is the effect it produces on cysts and tumors. This plant is a proven remedy against cancers of all types. Some say it is very useful in all variants of cancer. It is considered also as an anti microbial spectrum against bacterial infections and fungi, effective against internal parasites and worms, it regulates blood pressure which is too high and an antidepressant, combats stress and nervous disorders.

The source of this information is fascinating: it comes from one of the largest drug manufacturers in the world, says that after more than 20 laboratory tests since 1970, the extracts revealed that It destroys the malignant cells in 12 cancers, including colon, breast, prostate, lung and pancreas... The compounds of this tree showed 10,000 times better than the product Adriamycin, a drug normally used chemotherapeutic in the world, slowing the growth of cancer cells. And what is even more astonishing: this type of therapy with lemon extract only destroys malignant cancer cells and it does not affect healthy cells. So, give those lemons a good wash, freeze them and grate them. Your whole body will love you for it!!!!

China's one-child policy impact analysed

People growing up under China's one-child policy are less trusting, more risk averse and more pessimistic, a study concludes.

The lead author of the study Professor Lisa Cameron, from Monash University in Victoria, told the BBC's Science in Action programme: "We found that people born under the one-child policy were significantly less trusting and less trustworthy, significantly less likely to take risks and less competitive than those who were born before. "We also conducted personality surveys and we found that those born under the one-child policy were less conscientious, slightly more neurotic and significantly more pessimistic than those born before."

China's population-control policy was introduced in 1979, and it restricts couples in urban areas to have only one child. In China, there is a very common belief that the one child generation is spoilt and selfish and they are not hardworking"

Prof Meng said: "In China, there is a very common belief that the one-child generation is spoilt and selfish and they are not hardworking.... even though it is a common belief, no-one has ever tested this thing, or given hard evidence - and that is why we decided to study this."

She added that China was currently reconsidering its policy, and she hoped the results of the study would be taken into account.

Prof Meng explained: "In other societies where fertility is a choice, only certain types of people choose to give birth to a single child - the majority will not. And these people will have certain personality traits and behaviour patterns. And when they give birth to a single child, these children are more likely to inherit these traits.

When you look at a society where fertility is a free choice, then the results will be a combination of the qualities you inherited, plus those you have gained growing up as a single child. There are almost an infinite number of other explanations of anything else that could have varied with time

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Niles West High School
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2 p.m. - Art Exhibit, refreshments
3 p.m. - Program

The Greek Community invites you to this exciting event, which includes an original short video, skits, lively music and dances, as well as Greek appetizers. The emcee is Jane Monzures, TV/Radio personality and host of "Living Healthy Chicago" on WGN TV.

Meet the Author of War Games, Audrey Coulombis
Friday, February 22
• 7 p.m. at Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton, Skokie

Meet the Author of The Green Shore, Natalie Bakopoulos
Tuesday, March 5
• 7 p.m. at Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton, Skokie
Wednesday, March 6
• 10:30 a.m. at Niles West High School, 5701 Oakton, Skokie
Thursday, March 7
• 10:30 a.m. at Niles North High School, 9800 Lawler, Skokie

Myra Karman

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Your problems may be Varicose Veins!

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have leg heaviness or ache? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have spider veins on your legs and/or ankles? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do your legs burn, tingle or itch? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do the veins in your legs appear very dark blue or purple? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have swelling in your legs or ankles? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the pain in your legs worse after sitting or standing a long period of time? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have skin discoloration on your legs or ankles (Blue/Brown)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Did you or any of your parents or grandparents have varicose veins? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the skin on your legs red and dry? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have restless legs? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you experience cramps in your legs, especially at nights? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have non-healing wounds in your ankle areas? | |

If you have checked one or more of the boxes, please do yourself a favor and call USA Vein Clinics.

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Dysfunctional veins can also increase the risk of blood clots. Patients may experience a swelling in the leg, which may indicate a blood clot. Left untreated, these clots can travel through the bloodstream and lodge near the heart or lungs, causing potentially life-threatening health problems.

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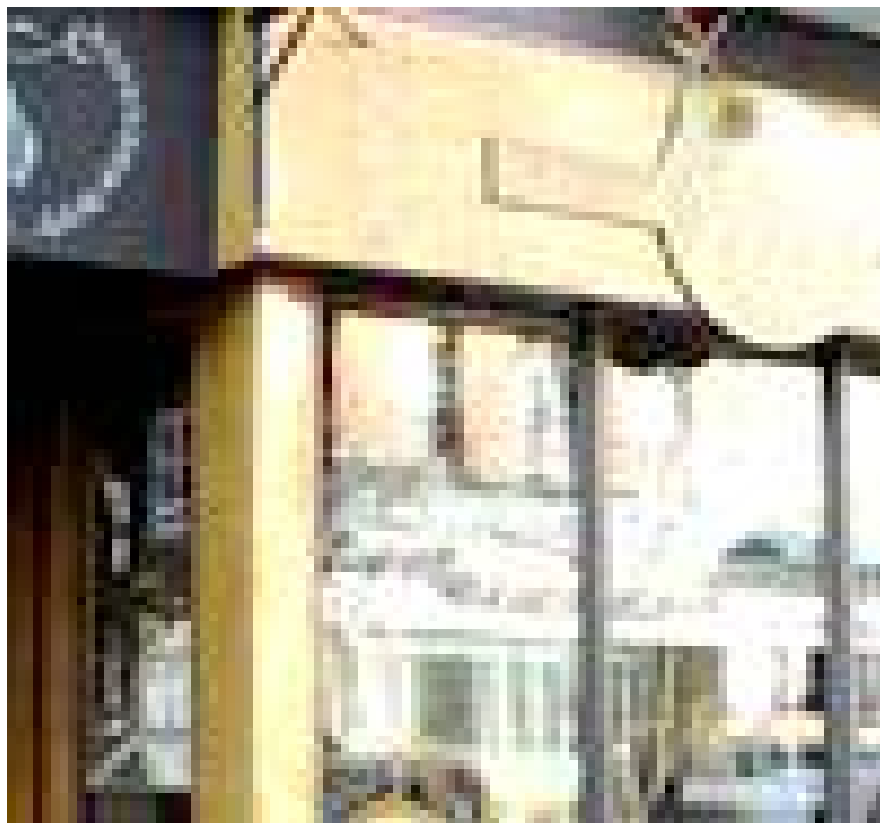
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3. Έξι διαφορετικές μάρκες κεφαλογραβιέρα από διάφορα μέρη της Ελλάδας και η περίφημη Κρητική γραβιέρα στην χόβολη (υγρή άμμο).
4. Μυζήθρα από Αδρίτσαινα.
5. 3 διαφορετικές βαρελίσιες φέτες από Ελλάδα.
6. 3 διαφορετικές φέτες από τενεκέ.
7. Μεγάλη ποικιλία από παξιμάδια Σαμαριά.
8. Βανίλλια από την Τήλο.
9. Μαστίχα από την Χίο.
10. Σπιτίσια τυροκαυτερή και ταραμοσαλάτα.
11. Γλυκά κουταλιού από 5 διαφορετικά μέρη της Ελλάδας.
12. Γίγαντες και φασόλια ατόφια από την Καστοριά και φακές από την Θήβα.
13. Και η έκπληξη: Ελιές Καλαμών και Αμφίσης χωρίς φάρμακα.
14. Σπιτίσιο μέλι χωρίς φάρμακα.
15. Σπιτίσιο λουκάνικο.
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Please! Read the labels and question the source of what you eat

I cannot verify everything written here but we can read and make our own decisions. This appears worth considering. Imported food we eat and the junk we buy. Green Giant frozen vegetables are from China, and so are most of Europe's Best. Arctic Gardens are Okay. So is Birdseye.

Never buy the grocery store garlic unless it is clearly marked from USA or Canada, the other stuff is grown in people poop (even worse than chicken poop). China is the largest producer of garlic in the world. U.S. is next. Buy only local honey, much honey is shipped in in huge containers from China and re-packed here.

Cold-FX is grown and packed in China and is full of fecal bacteria. Doesn't work anyway, big scam. If the country of origin is not clearly marked beware. If produce, ask an employee. Watch out for packages which state "prepared for", "packed by" or "imported by". I don't understand the lack of mandatory labeling, especially the produce. The country of origin should be clearly shown on the item in the store.

How is it possible to ship food from China cheaper than having it produced in the U.S. or Canada? FOR EXAMPLE THE "OUR FAMILY" BRAND OF MANDARIN ORANGES SAYS RIGHT ON THE CAN 'FROM CHINA'. SO, FOR A FEW MORE CENTS, BUY THE LIBERTY BRAND. GOLD BRAND OR THE DOLE IS FROM CALIFORNIA. Beware, Costco sells canned peaches and pears in a plastic jar that come from China.

ALL "HIGH LINER" AND MOST OTHER FROZEN FISH PRODUCTS COME FROM CHINA OR INDONESIA. THE PACKAGE MAY SAY "PACIFIC SALMON" ON THE FRONT, BUT LOOK FOR THE SMALL PRINT. MOST OF THESE PRODUCTS COME FROM FISH FARMS IN THE ORIENT WHERE THERE ARE NO REGULATIONS ON WHAT IS FED TO THESE FISH. Recently The Montreal Gazette had an article by the Canadian Government on how Chinese feed the fish: They suspend chicken wire crates over the fish ponds, and the fish feed on chicken s—t. If you search the internet about what the Chinese feed their fish, you'll be alarmed; e.g., growth hormones, expired anti-biotic from humans. Never buy any type of fish or shellfish that comes from these countries: Vietnam, China, Philippines.

Check this out personally. I did. Stienfeld's Pickles are made in India - just as bad! Another example is in canned mushrooms. No-Name brand came from Indonesia. Also check those little fruit cups. They used to be made in Canada in the Niagara region until about 2 years ago. They are now packaged in China! While the Chinese export inferior and even toxic products, dangerous toys, and goods to be sold in North American markets, the media wrings its hands! Yet, 70% of North Americans believe that the trading privileges afforded to the Chinese should be suspended! Well, duh! Why do you need the government to suspend trading privileges? SIMPLY DO IT YOURSELF, CANADA AND THE U.S.! Simply look on the bottom of every product you buy, and if it says 'Made in China' or 'PRC' (and that now includes Hong Kong), simply choose another product, or none at all. You will be amazed at how dependent you are on Chinese products, and you will be equally amazed at what you can do without.

THINK ABOUT THIS: If 200 million North Americans refuse to buy just \$20 each of Chinese goods, that's a billion dollar trade imbalance resolved in our favor...fast!! The downside? Some Canadian/American businesses will feel a temporary pinch from having foreign stockpiles of inventory. Just one month of trading losses will hit the Chinese for 8% of their North American exports. Then they will at least have to ask themselves if the benefits of their arrogance and lawlessness are worth it. START NOW and don't stop.

Last chapter' hailed in Afghan security plan

The US and Afghanistan have reached the "last chapter" in an effort to make Afghanistan secure and sovereign, the US defence secretary has said.

Leon Panetta's remarks came as he welcomed Afghan President Hamid Karzai to the Pentagon for talks.



Mr Karzai said he was confident the two countries could "work out the modality for bilateral security" during his three-day trip to Washington.

"After a long and difficult past, we finally are, I believe, at the last chapter of establishing a sovereign Afghanistan that can govern and secure itself for the future," Mr Panetta said on Thursday.

"We've come a long way towards a shared goal of establishing a nation that you and we can be proud of, one that never again becomes a safe haven for terrorism."

Mr Karzai's trip to Washington comes at a crucial time for relations between the two countries.

It follows a strained year between the US and Afghanistan, one that saw a series of attacks on US and Nato troops by members of the Afghan military and police and a string of incidents involving US forces that enraged Afghans, including the burning of Korans.

'A long way'

On Thursday, Mr Panetta thanked Mr Karzai for visiting US and Afghan wounded at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center outside Washington, saying the two countries had "created a bond that will not be broken in the future" after fighting side by side.

The Afghan president sought to assure Americans that Afghanistan would soon be able to provide for its own security and would never again be threatened by "terrorists from across our borders".

The US and Afghanistan are negotiating a bilateral security agreement that will determine the number of US troops to remain after most foreign combat troops leave Afghanistan by the end of next year.

On Tuesday, the White House said it was possible that no US troops would remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014. President Obama is planning to pull most of the 66,000 US troops out of Afghanistan - well down from a high of about 100,000.

White House officials had previously suggested they favoured keeping between 3,000 and 9,000 US soldiers in Afghanistan after the combat mission ends.

Mr Karzai has been reluctant to sign a long-term binding security agreement with the US amid fears it would undermine Afghan sovereignty.

Correspondents say he is unwilling to grant US soldiers immunity from prosecution and is unhappy that Afghans are still being held in US-run military prisons on Afghan soil. US and Iraqi authorities reached a similar sticking point in negotiations over the drawdown of US troops from Iraq. Aside from a contingent guarding the embassy, all US soldiers left the country by December.



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Olympiacos Soccer School Chicago players, coaching staff, parents and leadership visited Advocate Lutheran General Children's Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois, USA today, December 22, 2012 at 11:00 am to continue Olympiacos FC's philanthropic mission. The charitable contribution was extended to Ms. Mary Kozil, Director of Development.

Mr. Vaggelis Marinakis, President of Olympiacos FC along with the entire Olympiacos Family's generous spirit and heartfelt interest to assist those in need were evident here in Chicago. Olympiacos FC values and supports programs that benefit children in need. We are excited that our contribution will help various programs and enable children of all ages to get the services and assistance they need to overcome all of their health obstacles.

Among those present at the charitable contribution were John Kosmas, Director of Operations, Angela Kosmas, Director of Communications and Public Relations, and Nikos Mirtsekis, Director of Coaching. Olympiacos Soccer School Chicago players and supporters had the opportunity to learn more about the programs and tour the facility that provides the gift of hope to all.

NEWS FROM GREECE

Budget beats the targets set for 2012

Containment of spending brought deficit lower than expected, despite shortfall in revenues.

The state budget appears to have beaten the targets set for 2012, according to preliminary figures released on Thursday by the Finance Ministry, even though revenues lagged both the target and the 2011 intake.

The budget deficit has come to 15.9 billion euros against a target for 16.3 billion, while the primary deficit undercut the target of 4.6 billion euros, ending up at just 3.7 billion. This was due to the dramatic decline in expenditure, the curtailing of the Public Investment Program and the considerable reduction in tax refunds.

Net revenues amounted to 51.7 billion euros in the January-December 2012 period, which was 4.1 percent lower than those in 2011, and 1.3 percent or 687 million euros below the target set for 2012. The shortfall is attributed to the reduced inflow from the European Union toward the Public Investment Program, which was 1 billion euros below target. Budget spending amounted to 67.6 billion euros, down from a target for 68.7 billion.

However, the optimism recorded over the last few weeks should not lead to the relaxing of efforts to streamline the economy, the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Re-

search (IOBE) warned on Thursday, adding that an economic rebound can be expected by the first quarter of 2014.

In its quarterly report the foundation forecast that the contraction this year will end up at 4.6 percent, from 6.6 percent in 2012, but unemployment will climb to 27.3 percent from 24.5 percent last year.

IOBE believes that the rebound of the Greek economy cannot rely on consumption, especially with borrowed money. In this context, the main factor that it says will kick-start the rebound is investment in public works, through the direct inflow of funds from abroad, from the Greek private sector and via investment as a result of privatizations.

Nikos Zonzilos, a research associate at IOBE, said during the presentation of the report on Thursday that the problem of unemployment will be resolved but "it will take time." IOBE believes it will take many years for the jobless rate to return to the 2008 level of below 9 percent.

NGOs call for permanent policy for homeless

Emergency measures not enough, experts say, amid low turnout at shelters

Amid reports that only a handful of people have taken advantage of the hospitality centers set up for homeless citizens by the City of Athens, despite the cold snap, representatives of nongovernment organizations on Thursday stressed the need for a comprehensive policy for permanent housing as opposed to emergency solutions.

"We are not against emergency measures but a preventive policy needs to be set out," Spyros Psychas, the head of the Greek Network for the Right to Shelter and a Home, told Kathimerini. He noted that protection should not only be offered to those sleeping on the streets but also to those living in substandard accommodation or facing eviction.

There is no official record of the number of Greece's homeless, which is estimated at 20,000 and rising, but criteria were recently introduced to legally classify people as homeless. Having legal residence in Greece is a prerequisite for this status but establishing this is often difficult as often homeless people have no ID, NGO representatives pointed out.

The low absorption rate of European Union funding for homeless projects is another problem, according to Tzanetos Antypas, the president of Praksis.

Separately, it emerged on Thursday that the Union of Greek Shipowners is offering to support 500 low-income Ath-

ens families with a 35-kilogram package of food every month.

Work on highway projects to restart in April, Hatzidakis says

Up to 7 billion euros will be earmarked for investments in Greece, Development Minister Costis Hatzidakis said Thursday as he confirmed that construction work is set to recommence on four highway projects.

Speaking to Skai radio, Hatzidakis said that works on four highway projects across the country, which had ground to a halt because of funding shortfalls, are set to restart in April. This will also mark the rebooting of Greece's anemic economy, he said.

Deputy Development Minister Athanasios Skordas said that the projects will create 30,000 new jobs. He said the government has already completed negotiations for the funding of the projects.

The government has been assisting the contractors by negotiating with banks for funding for the stalled projects, although the loan will be between the contractors and lenders.

Small men in big positions

We should not jump to any conclusions regarding the fate of the so-called Lagarde list – named after former French Finance Minister and current IMF chief Christine Lagarde, who presented authorities in Athens with a record of Greek depositors at a Geneva bank. Investigations by our financial prosecutors and Parliament into the list and its handling are under way and will reveal whether anyone tampered with it and whether it contains the names of people who owe money to the state. Once those investigations are complete, any wrongdoers will be forced to face up to their responsibilities, so until that time, let us all remain levelheaded. Rage rarely serves as wise counsel and spite even less so.

Of course, under no circumstances should anyone found to have tampered with the list, hidden data or cached money away from the taxman's eyes be let off lightly, and neither should we underestimate the fact that the meting out of justice both educates people and helps them vent their anger. At the end of the day, the illegal behavior of one top minister, prompted purely by self-interest, even when in regard to something slight, reveals the measure of the man on major issues as well. The same person who handled a record of banking data also handled the fate of the country and of the next one or two generations, and did so with the same moral and intellectual outlook. The worst thing is that he is not alone, neither in self-interest, nor in negligence.

One explanation for the revelations made in regard to the Lagarde list is that this is a case of small men in big positions during monumental times. These are men who answer to no one other than themselves and to those above them who have sanctioned their behavior. They do not answer to the people, nor to the guiding democratic institutions of the country. They care nothing for history nor for the blow they deal to others. Another explanation for this kind of behavior could be found in the heroes of Fyodor Dostoevsky: men who are capable of both grandeur and baseness. That second argument holds little water in this case, however.

Despite the motivations guiding the people involved in the Lagarde list, what we should not lose sight of is that if we focus all of our energies on looking for the bad guys, we risk losing sight of the wood because we are too focused on the trees. The fact is that there is a very fine line dividing the need for justice to prevail and the need to draw blood in spite, between the demand for order and the demand for taking people down.



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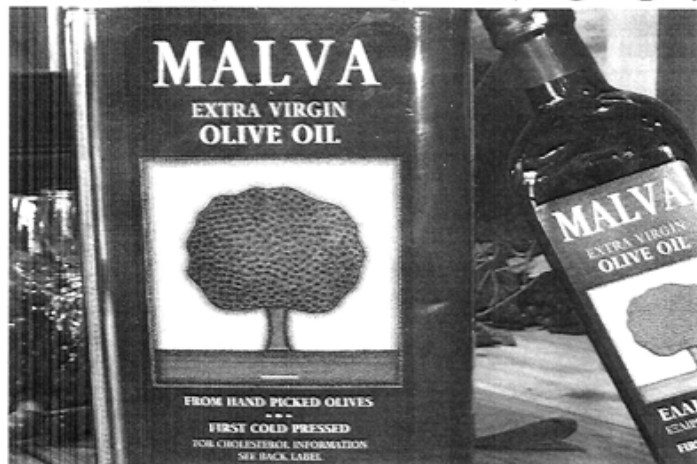
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The genealogy of violence

As Golden Dawn extremism grows, some critics blame chronic tolerance of left-wing radicalism

By Harry van Versendaal

When Dimitris Stratoulis, a leftist lawmaker, was assaulted by alleged far-right extremists at a soccer stadium last month, many in Greece found it hard to disguise feeling some degree of Schadenfreude.

It appeared that the tables had finally turned on Greece's main SYRIZA opposition party, which has in the past failed to provide a convincing condemnation – some would say it in fact silently condoned – similar attacks on its political opponents.

Greeks have traditionally been more accustomed to social unrest and political disobedience than their European Union peers, but the meteoric rise of Golden Dawn, a neo-Nazi party that was comfortably voted into Parliament for the first time last year, has spawned a local Historikerstreit, a contested debate among politicians and pundits about the causes and the nature of violence.

Ideological hegemony

Interestingly, some critics have gone as far as to blame Golden Dawn's shocking surge on the country's left, which, despite losing the civil war, went on to win the ideological hegemony. Public tolerance of left-wing radicalism in the years following the end of the military dictatorship in 1974 – what is commonly referred to in Greece as "metapolitefsi" – allegedly laid the ground for Golden Dawn's violent extremism in providing some sort of social legitimacy.

"Only blindness or bias would prevent someone from noticing the connection between public attitudes regarding the violence of the extreme left and the rise of the violent extreme right in Greece," said Stathis Kalyvas, a political science professor and an expert on the subject of political violence at the University of Yale.

"If public attitudes vis-a-vis leftist violence had been different, the extreme right would have been much more constrained in its use of violence today," he said, stressing however that there is no casual relationship between the violence of the two political extremes.

Blogger Konstantinos Palaskas, a contributor to the liberal Ble Milo (Blue Apple) blog, says that the antics of left-wing and anarchist troublemakers during protest marches and university and school occupations over the last 30 years, and the public's acceptance of them, have significantly influenced the players of the new far-right.

"The left's violent interventions, its disregard for the law, and the acceptance of its lawbreaking activity by a section of society – combined with the state's tolerance of all this – were a lesson for people at the other end [of the political spectrum]," said Palaskas.

The habit forms at an early stage. The governing of universities has for years been hijacked by political parties and youth party officials. The country only recently scrapped an asylum law that prevented police from entering university campuses, hence allowing left-leaning activists to rampage through laboratories and lecture theaters.

Despite incidents of rectors being taken hostage, university offices being trashed and labs used for non-academic purposes, many Greeks remain uncomfortable with the idea of police entering university grounds and more than a few support SYRIZA's promise to repeal the law if it forms a government.

Beyond the universities, left-wing unionists – like the Communist Party (KKE)'s militant PAME group – traditionally organize street blockades and sit-ins at public buildings as a form of protest. Mass rallies, interpreted by many as a sign of a vibrant democracy, regularly turn violent and destructive. Groups of hooded youths carrying stones and petrol bombs ritually clash with riot police, who respond with tear gas and stun grenades. Public property is damaged, banks are set on fire and cars are smashed, but arrests and convictions are surprisingly rare.

Serious injuries and fatalities were also rare, until May 2010, when three people were killed as hooded protesters set fire to a branch of Marfin Bank in central Athens during a general strike over planned austerity measures. Demonstrators marching past the burning bank shouted slogans against the workers trapped inside the building. No arrests have been made in connection with the murders, which many leftists have blamed – like other similar incidents – on agents provocateurs.

A few months later, Costis Hatzidakis, a conservative heavyweight who is now development minister, was beaten up by unidentified protesters before being led away bleeding on the sidelines of a demonstration against the then Socialist government's cost-cutting policies.

The reaction of SYRIZA, a collection of leftist, even militant groupings, to such incidents has been rather ambiguous as the party – which denies links to violent groupings – has repeatedly fallen short of providing a clear-cut condemnation of violence.

"We condemn violence but we understand the frustration of those who react violently to the violence of the memorandum," SYRIZA chief Alexis Tsipras said of the painful bailout agreement signed with the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. Critics responded by accusing the left of giving in to ethical relativism, by seeking to differentiate between "good" and "bad" violence as it sees fit.

A few months ago, SYRIZA refused to vote for a motion by the Parliament's ethics committee that condemned violence, arguing that the text should refer to "racist violence" and not just "violence." Party officials appeared concerned that the motion could be used to sabotage acts of popular struggle versus the injustices of the state. KKE, as is its wont, chose to abstain from the vote.

When the residents of Keratea, a small town 40 kilometers southeast of Athens, fought, often violently, with police forces for three months over the planned construction of a huge landfill in the area, Tsipras hailed the "town that has become a symbol for the whole of Greece."

But nowhere has social tolerance of violence been more evident than in the case of domestic terrorism. November 17, a self-styled Marxist urban guerrilla group, assassinated 25 people in 103 attacks from 1975 until it was disbanded in 2002. One of the reasons the terrorists managed to remain elusive for so long, many analysts believe, was that its actions, mostly targeting American officials and members of Greece's wealthy "big bourgeois class," did not enrage the mainstream public, fed on years of anti-American rhetoric from long-serving socialist Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou.

"Public opinion, as recorded in several surveys, viewed terrorists either with sympathy or indifference. There was hardly any mass mobilization against this group," Kalyvas said.

In an opinion poll conducted a few months before the dismantling of November 17, 23.7 percent of respondents – nearly one in four – said they accepted the organization's political and ideological views, although most said they disagreed with its practices. Only 31.3 percent said they wanted the guerrillas to put their guns down and turn themselves in to the authorities. Later, many on the left slammed the government's anti-terror law as an attempt to crack down on civil liberties.

For Kalyvas, in a public arena saturated with rhetorical violence – for example the increasingly frequent calls for hanging or executing traitors, especially during the Indignant protest gatherings in central Syntagma Square in the summer of 2011 – it was perhaps predictable that the violence of the extreme right may strike a large number of people as a quasi-legitimate political weapon "How surprising can it be to see

the public responding in this way, after four decades of being consistently told that political violence can be justified?" he asked. That the tolerance of violence may have played a role in the rise of Golden Dawn. But there was nothing particularly left-wing about the displays of lawlessness, she points out. "Sure, the law was often not enforced, there was an anything-goes mentality, a sense that people stand above the institutions," Georgiadou said.

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The evening will feature a sit-down dinner and a live DJ, which will play music for dancing. Doors will open at 6:00pm, followed by dinner at 7:00pm. An open bar will also be available to all attending. Awards, a top notch silent auction and many more surprises are also scheduled.

The cost for the gala is \$75 per person (children 12 years and under are \$30). Organizers are requesting that those interested respond by January 18, 2013.

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