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Graduation from College – A Distant Goal for Today’s Students

By Chris P. Tomaras

The graduating class of 2015 will have more college students who should have been part of the class of 2013. How could this be, you may ask? It is because the 4-year college degree is fast becoming the 6-year college degree.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics for 2014, first-time, full-time undergraduates who began their college education in 2006 at a 4-year degree granting institution, 57% received their bachelor’s degree in 2012, not in 2010. Students who were enrolled in a private nonprofit college, 66%, earned their degree in six years. What does this all mean? Only approximately 40% of college students graduate in four years.



There are a myriad of reasons as to why it may take a student longer to complete their degree, but many reasons focus on money. Rising tuition costs, diminished scholarship opportunities and reduced amount of financial awards are just a few reasons. Nearly 80% of today’s college students have some kind of part-time job to help them meet tuition, book and living expenses. Many students have worked while in college, but the increasing financial demands to pay for their education is taking a priority and lengthening the time it takes for them to obtain a degree.

Equally disconcerting is the fact that for many students, including our Greek-American undergraduates, the goal of graduating in four years is becoming more distant. For some, the goal of graduating at all may never become a reality. I can only think of the terrible brain drain that could be happening. Compared to industrialized nations, the United States’ rank has dropped to 11—in some studies to 15—regarding the number of students earning a college degree. In China, many students are on the fast track, completing their undergraduate degrees in three years. How can America remain competitive if it takes our students more time to earn a college degree?

From the employer perspective, the pool of qualified postsecondary workers is shrinking. The Bureau of Labor estimates that by 2018, just three years away, 63% of all jobs will require a college education, but there will not be enough college degreeed students. A Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce estimates that if the current college completion rates continue, there will be 3 million less workers by 2018. The longer it takes a student to complete their degrees, the longer it takes them to begin their career. The lost earning power can be devastating.

What also can be devastating is the emotional drain some students may experience in having to extend their college education. The ability to remain focused on completing the degree requires perseverance and commitment. Some students may become discouraged, disillusioned, so much so that they make the decision to drop out of college. Many who interrupt their studies do not return to complete their degree.

That is why the PanHellenic Scholarship Foundation plays such an integral

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Proudly Introducing our 2015 Mistress of Ceremonies Krystal White

Actress. Writer. Producer. These words sum up the passion and pursuits of Krystal White, a Greek African-American who made the art of storytelling her career. Her love of film, and the beauty of getting lost in someone else’s story, became the inspiration behind the basis of her dreams. Born in Colorado and raised in California, Krystal spent some of her childhood in Greece attending middle and high school at the American Community School of Athens, ultimately receiving her Bachelor of Arts combined Honors Degree in English Literature and the History of Art in the United Kingdom. In 2006, she had the opportunity to work on the set of Harry Potter & The Order of the Phoenix. This first experience inspired her to pursue a career in the film industry. She continued to gain knowledge on the sets of other films, including Mamma Mia!, and eventually started assisting established writers in script development.



As of recent, Krystal has starred with Greek-Australian actor Louis Mandylor and Lainie Kazan (both alumni of My Big Fat Greek Wedding) in Persephone - a love story based on Greek mythology which aired nationally on The Short Movie Channel. This past Fall, Krystal also wrote her first short film, The Interrogation, which is currently being submitted to festivals. From scriptwriting to filmmaking, Krystal enjoys the translation of human connection on the widescreen. She currently resides in Los Angeles, a place that offers opportunities to artists like herself, but still appreciates her time spent living in Greece where the hospitality is unmatched.

With great respect and pride, the PanHellenic Scholarship Foundation looks forward to Krystal White’s participation in the 2015 Awards Ceremony and Gala on Saturday, June 20, 2015, at the Hilton Chicago, where there will be dinner, dancing, and entertainment by the Chris Sarlas Orchestra. Save the date and don’t forget to purchase your raffle tickets for the chance to win \$10,000!

As in previous years, we will be honoring an established and renowned Greek-American individual with the Paradigm Award. We will be announcing the name of this year’s honoree on April 30th, 2015, so stay tuned!

We invite you to attend Chicago’s premiere scholarship event honoring the best and brightest Greek-American students from across the nation.

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PUBLISHER
SOTIRIS REKOUMIS
EDITOR
DENISE REKOUMIS
LAYOUTS
JOHN REKOUMIS
CONTRIBUTORS

DR. STAVROS BASSEAS, JOHN REKOUMIS,
DENISE REKOUMIS, DR JORDAN TSOLAKIDIS,
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1. To applaud the achievements of our ethnic group
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SUITE 1801
CHICAGO, IL. 60611**



Maria Pappas
Cook County Treasurer

May 1, 2015

Mr. Sotirios Rekoumis
Editor
Omogeneia
7902 N. Maple Ave.
Morton Grove, IL 60053

Dear Sotirios:

With admiration, I offer my congratulations as "Omogeneia" celebrates the 26th anniversary of its publication.

You and all associated with your publication perform a most valuable service not only for your readers but for the larger community. Providing information in a coherent and meaningful manner is not merely a job, it is a mission.

I salute you for your commitment to mission, which is so important to all who are familiar with your publication and depend on it: Readers and the business community that benefit each other because of your efforts.

As one who believes that reading is the most crucial form of communication, I thank you and wish you a long run for your publication.

Sincerely,

Maria Pappas
Cook County Treasurer

:bb

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Graduation from College – A Distant Goal for Today's Students

(From p. 1)

role in ensuring that students complete their education in four years. Our scholarship awards program provides the financial resources deserving college students need to stay in school. It also recognizes the tremendous talent that our Greek American college students have and encourages them to stay the course and become lifelong achievers.



We are committed to making sure our students who demonstrate the drive, perseverance and outstanding academic abilities remain on track to complete their degree in four years. And we are proud to share with you that since our inception, all 324 students who have received scholarships totaling \$2.3 million completed their degrees in four years. They have gone on to be successful in their chosen careers. They are contributing meaningfully to society and they are keeping their Hellenic heritage alive.

You can help us make sure that our Greek-American students continue their pathway to success. Your financial support of the PanHellenic Scholarship Foundation is the key that unlocks a student's potential. Every donation opens a door for a deserving student and with a contribution of \$1,000, you can open the door for two students through our Chairman's Challenge Matching Gift Program.

For every donation we receive of \$1,000 to \$10,000, I will personally match your contribution dollar for dollar. I pledge my commitment to ensuring our students have adequate resources to earn their undergraduate degree on time. I ask you to pledge your commitment and help a worthy student succeed by donating to the PanHellenic Scholarship Foundation.

Join us on Saturday, June 20, 2015 at the Hilton Chicago for our Annual Awards Ceremony and Gala as we honor and recognize the accomplishments of our outstanding scholarship recipients. Show them you care and support their journey.

To make your reservation, call (312) 357-6432 or visit www.panhellenicscholarships.org for more information. I look forward to seeing you on June 20th.

Engaging the Greek diaspora

Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias in an interview in New York, last month. During his visit, Kotzias met with representatives of the Greek diaspora.

By Tom Ellis

Leftist Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and his aides must realize what the country has to gain from diaspora Greeks. Then they must take steps indicating that they respect these people and are willing to work with them for the good of the country.



It's hard to see how a nation whose diaspora population around the world numbers millions – including, it has to be said, people with significant economic and political influence – has failed to elevate relations with them to a top priority. At this time when the government is calling for the opposition's support, the diaspora is an area that is open to cross-party consensus and cooperation.

Diaspora Greeks have proved time and again that they love Greece more than its inhabitants, they are anxious about its fate, and are ready to help. All they want is some inspiration from the Greek leader, a tangible sign that some things are changing.

Through their political, financial and social activities in key nations such as the USA and Germany, diaspora Greeks are able to influence political and economic developments. Their intention is to help any Greek government regardless of ideological tags. During their recent visits to Washington, Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis and Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias both met with well-known members of the Greek diaspora. According to an influential Greek American with strong entrepreneurial, political and diplomatic activity, "they are an unknown quantity in Washington and we are trying to build bridges between the new Greek government and the centers of power."

Furthermore, many diaspora Greeks are keen to invest in Greece, in projects of all sizes, often in their place where they or their families are from. The problem is they are put off by the notorious Greek bureaucracy, or corruption.

One might ask whether Tsipras can really succeed where Socialist Prime Minister George Papandreou or his conservative successor Antonis Samaras – both of whom had close ties to the diaspora – failed. In any case, the new premier still ought to invest time and effort. It will boost his political capital and, most importantly, help Greece.

A first step in that direction would be to introduce a deputy minister for diaspora Greeks. Considering the number of alternate and deputy ministers in the leftist-led government, there is certainly room for an official who could act as a bridge with Greeks abroad. And, finally, we should start a debate about how these people can vote and if they should be represented.

Their participation and presence would enrich the public debate, bring fresh ideas and build bridges with other countries. Any government that opens this chapter will win considerable support among young voters.

Phony dilemma

By Costas Iordanidis

The coalition government of SYRIZA and Independent Greeks may have a lot of weaknesses, a complete lack of experience in governance and fixations that are endemic to the left, but we should not underestimate Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's and his aides' ability to manipulate the parties of the opposition. Ahead of Monday's Eurogroup, as part of an overall effort to dramatize the negotiation process in Brussels, the government introduced the issue of a referendum on whether or not the administration should strive for a compromise and go back on some pre-election pledges.

The finance ministers of the eurozone took the news in stride. In fact, Germany's Wolfgang Schaeuble said that he had advised former Prime Minister George Papandreou to hold a referendum. In contrast, back in Athens, the Pavlovian reaction with which all opposition parties are programmed prompted the systemic parties to adopt a rather derogatory stance in regard to Greek citizens' ability to decide on such serious matters, the management of which they consider should be the exclusive property of the elite.

The real danger of such a referendum at this stage does not lie in the result, which would overwhelmingly be in favor of staying in the eurozone, but rather in the fact that it would solidify a trend in favor of a Greek exit from the eurozone. It would create the conditions of division, without any real reason, at a time when Tsipras and his government have obviously decided that whatever solution is found, it should be within the eurozone framework.

It was a ruse, and while it failed to incite a reaction from the eurozone ministers, it exposed Greece's opposition parties as being skeptical of the Greeks' good judgment. In short, the entire discussion is being held on terms defined by SYRIZA. The so-called European forces of this country still have a lot to learn from the other Europeans about how to behave.

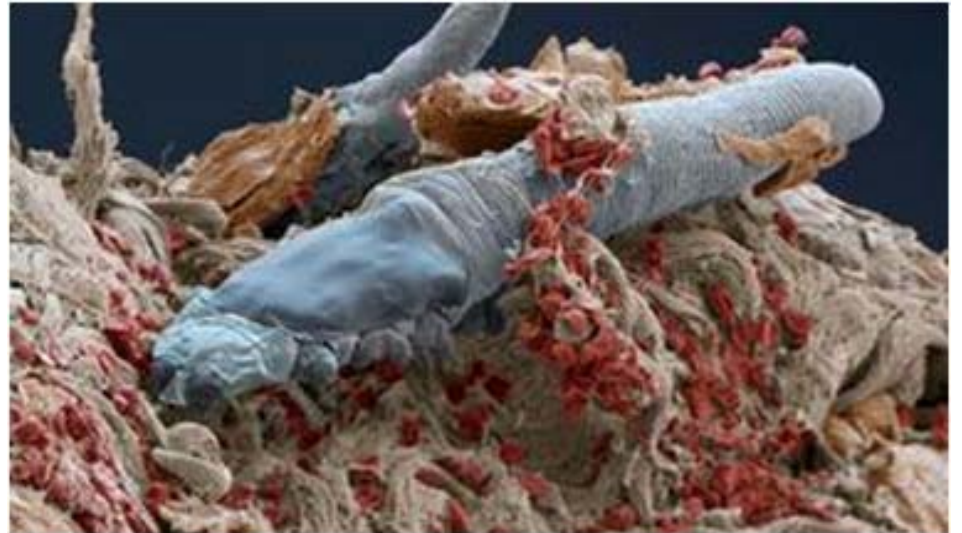
The referendum may now be off the table but the issue will create problems when New Democracy or PASOK will have to support whatever agreement the government comes to Parliament with. We cannot know what the content of this "honorable compromise" would be. It is likely to be worse than what the previous government was in the process of negotiating before the elections.

At the end of the day, what's at stake is Greece's place in the eurozone and this is ostensibly what the so-called pro-European parties want as well. Sure, they can criticize particular measures and reforms and must do so boldly, but they must uphold whatever deal is presented in principle, and this goes especially for New Democracy.

PICTURES OF THE WORLD



Dozens die as a new earthquake of magnitude 7.3 strikes Nepal, two weeks after a devastating tremor killed more than 8,000.



You can't see them, but they're there. They are microscopic mites, eight-legged creatures rather like spiders. Almost every human being has them. They spend their entire lives on our faces, where they eat, mate and finally die.



Derailed Amtrak train 'was speeding' A commuter train that derailed in Philadelphia, killing at least seven people, was travelling at twice the speed limit, say safety experts.



A chicken embryo with a dinosaur-like snout instead of a beak has been developed by scientists. The idea that birds evolved from dinosaurs has been around since the 19th century, when scientists discovered the fossil of an early bird called Archaeopteryx. It had wings and feathers, but it also looked a lot like a dinosaur. More recent fossils look similar. To understand how one changed into another, a team has been tampering with the molecular processes that make up a beak in chickens. By doing so, they have managed to create a chicken embryo with a dinosaur-like snout and palate, similar to that of small feathered dinosaurs like Velociraptor.



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How to Live Well into Old Age

There's something to look forward to about getting old: contentment and satisfaction increases with age. Research has found people in 80s are even happier than people in their 70s. But before you start to celebrate, you need to ensure that you get there. It's never too late to make a new start. Even if you neglected healthy habits earlier in life, there are still benefits to changing your lifestyle now. You can reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer, and bone fractures by making smart changes with exercise and eating healthy.

Use technology to track your habits

When you start making changes, it's useful to have a fuller picture of your health and charting your progress helps give you insight into your progress. You can monitor your exercise with activity monitors and pedometers. You can also log your exercise and food intake with smartphone apps or monitor your blood pressure with a home blood pressure machine.

Wear sunscreen and say goodbye to wrinkles

Using sunscreen daily prevents wrinkles and protects skin from unnecessary aging. The benefits aren't only reaped from starting young, although that doesn't hurt. You can start in middle age. Use a product with SPF of 30, minimum.

Adopt a pet

Pets can help fill the void that empty nest often creates for some people. Studies show that people with pets have lower cholesterol, heart diseases and overall visits to the doctor. Having a dog also gives you a reason to go for a daily walk, which is an excellent form of exercise.

Exercise to decrease your chances of Alzheimer's

Exercise can help boost the blood flow to your brain and facilitate the growth of new brain cells. Studies have shown regular exercise in middle age can lessen your risk of memory and cognitive degeneration by 39%. You don't have to enter marathons: 30 minutes of walking, biking or gardening five times a week is more than enough to boost the blood flow.

Rediscover sex

Just because you're aging doesn't mean you have to forgo sex. It's important as a form of exercise and for your happiness. With age, the experience might be different, and better: you have more time, fewer interruptions, and you know what you like.

Beware of salt

Blood pressure tends to increase as we age, and sodium is often at fault because it drives up blood pressure. Salt is often hidden in food such as packaged or canned foods, breads, and rolls. If you want to combat sodium naturally, eat a banana. Their high po-

tassium content keeps your blood pressure low and helps lessen the effect of sodium in your diet.

Be more selective with your food choices

Because your metabolism slows down with age, you need fewer calories in your diet. This means you have to be more selective about your food and choose foods packed with nutrients. Good choices are leafy green fruit and vegetables or foods fortified with vitamins such as cereal and milk. It's also advisable to cut down on candy and sugary drinks as they tend to have lots of empty calories.



Include good fats in your diet

While it's old news that saturated fats wreak havoc on your arteries and heart, it's not as well known that they can damage your memory and concentration. While it's a good idea to cut down on foods saturated in fats (e.g. red meat, butter), it's equally important to add good fats to your diet. Examples are fatty fish, seeds and nuts. These fats have added

value for both your heart and brain.

Choose strength building exercises

A recent study found that regular strength training helped reverse the aging process in muscles in older people. Make sure to include both aerobics and muscle building in your exercise choice.

Be a social butterfly, and volunteer

Studies show that people, who socialize with family and friends, have lower risks of memory problems and generally have a sharper mind. Similarly, volunteering has been linked to longevity and lower rates of heart disease. Studies reveal that the earlier you start, the lower your health risk problems.

Include balance exercise in your life

When choosing a form of exercise consider Tai Chi or other balance focused movements. This can help you prevent future falls and injuries. A study found that six months of Tai Chi helped reduce the chances of falling in half.

Engage in learning

Seeking new experiences keeps the mind young and healthy because they help build new pathways in the brain. Try a new language, musical instrument or new hobbies. This can also help you make new friends and expand your options for excitement and happiness.

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NEWS FROM GREECE

Krugman advises against 'nightmare' euro exit



Economist and New York Times columnist Paul Krugman spoke at the Athens Concert Hall on Friday.

Although Krugman was critical of the way that the eurozone has handled Greece's crisis, he advised the government not to consider an exit from the single currency. He said that such a move would be "nightmarish."

"The transition cost would be enormous," he added.

Krugman suggested that Greece should accept a deal that would allow it to achieve a smaller primary surplus, although he added that some of lenders' demands for structural reforms are "just demands for more austerity."

The Armenian genocide and Hagia Sophia

Pope Francis's declaration that the slaughter of Armenians by Ottoman forces 100 years ago was "the first genocide of the 20th century" will hasten the conversion of the Hagia Sophia museum into a mosque, the top Muslim official in Ankara responded. The Turkish government has long wanted to turn the symbol of Orthodox Christianity into a mosque, and last Friday – Good Friday for the Orthodox – verses from the Koran were recited at the opening of an exhibition at Hagia Sophia, 84 years after it was converted from a mosque into a museum by the founder of



modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The statement by mufti Mefail Hizli, reported by the Hurriyet Daily News on Thursday, suggests that Turkey's rage at its inability to stop a growing tide of recognition of the Armenian genocide is encouraging autocratic tendencies and bigotry. It is not only the country's few remaining Christians who will suffer but Turkish society as a whole.

It is difficult to comprehend how a papal statement on the Armenian issue should weigh on Hagia Sophia, seeing as the roads of Catholic and Orthodox Christians separated nearly 1,000 years ago (in 1054). Today's Turkish government shows the arrogance of a conqueror who believes that all he sees is hostage to his will. The Ottoman conquerors did convert the Hagia Sophia church into a mosque, but they also commissioned their best architects to build grand new mosques – the Fatih, Suleyman and Sultan Ahmet mosques – honoring Hagia Sophia by trying to outdo it. In his conviction that Turkey had to be built on secular foundations, Ataturk

turned Hagia Sophia into a museum, acknowledging the building's ecumenical significance.

Under the dominance of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was prime minister from 2003 until his election as president last year, Turkey is at the crossroads between East and West, between autocracy and democracy, between tolerance and bigotry. In next June's parliamentary elections, the AKP party which Erdogan founded and still controls, could triumph with about 50 percent of the vote, according to recent polls. After the election, Ergodan aims to strengthen the office of the presidency and will do all that is necessary to achieve this. Converting Hagia Sophia into a mosque will please the AKP's religious voters and also make clear that the secular regime founded by Ataturk is dead.

Recently, Erdogan has shown increasingly autocratic tendencies. Now, the government's inability to prevent international recognition of the Armenian genocide is driving him to greater displays of anger, arrogance, greed and envy. He will learn that he can neither ignore history nor subject an ecumenical symbol to his will.

Olive oil standardization could boost exports



The Greek economy could enjoy additional revenues of 250 million euros per year from olive oil exports if the commodity were utilized appropriately (i.e. not exported in bulk) and standardized in Greece with its own distinctive identity, according to a report by the National Bank of Greece.

Currently annual olive oil export revenues amount to 310 million euros, so there is the potential for takings of more than half a billion euros, while the replacement of bulk olive oil by a standardized product would also bring revenues of 85 million euros to the state from value-added tax alone.

However, just as is the case with other commodities, Greece appears to be missing out on olive oil demand as although global demand has risen more than 100 percent in recent years, the market share of standardized Greek olive oil has dropped from 6 percent in the 1990s to 4 percent in the last five years.

Furthermore, unless something changes, Greece will not only have to compete with Italy and Spain, but also with new international market players such as Tunisia, Portugal, Morocco and Turkey. In Greece no more than 27 percent of local olive oil is standardized, against 50 percent in Spain and 80 percent in Italy.

Greek gov't mulls measures with eye on

deal while some hold hard line



Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis arrives for a ministerial meeting at the Maximos Mansion in Athens, on Wednesday.

The government's strategy in negotiations with creditors and a raft of possible measures, including tax reforms, that could form the basis of an agreement, dominated a marathon cabinet meeting on Wednesday chaired by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.

The meeting, which ran late into the night, was aimed at examining a wide range of changes to the tax system as well as possible privatizations ahead of technical-level talks that are due to resume in Brussels on Thursday. Officials also discussed the possible timing for drafting some of these changes into legislation in a bid to show good will and convince the European Central Bank to relax liquidity restrictions on Greece.

Comments by cabinet members earlier in the day gave a mixed picture of the government's intentions with some insisting that it remained focused on reaching a deal while others suggested there should be no compromise with the demands of Greece's creditors, despite the increasingly tight liquidity situation.

Speaking in Parliament, Energy Minister Panayiotis Lafazanis, who heads SYRIZA's radical Left Platform, said, "This government will not surrender," noting that "those who believe we will step back from our red lines are deluding themselves." He was referring to SYRIZA's pre-election pledges to protect pensions and the rights of workers. Another senior member of the Left Platform was widely quoted in the media as saying that Greece will be unable to reach a deal with creditors this month as the latter "keep yanking our chain" and that Greece might be forced to "go it alone."

Interior Minister Nikos Voutsis appeared more conciliatory. "We are working toward an honorable compromise," he told Mega TV. "Immediate recourse to a referendum or elections is not in our plans right now."

Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis caused a stir earlier in the day when he said he could not guarantee that the government would be in power next January. He said his comments, which were in response to a question from one of hundreds of ministry cleaning staff who were rehired by the new administration, had been blown out of proportion.

Meanwhile as SYRIZA officials continued to suggest that Bank of Greece Governor Yannis Stournaras is undermining the leftist-led government, the honorary chairman of conservative New Democracy, Constantinos Mitsotakis, indicated that the central banker was being

wrongly accused. Stournaras can be accused of "not informing politicians and the Greek people about the huge burdens that taxpayers are being burdened with... and of the dire state of the Greek economy, but he cannot be accused of the opposite," he said. Mitsotakis was apparently responding to media reports according to which a close aide of Stournaras sent an e-mail to certain journalists which painted a particularly bad picture of the economy and to broader claims by SYRIZA officials that Stournaras is undermining the government. In a related development, Bloomberg reported that the European Central Bank is increasingly concerned by a deteriorating relationship between the Greek government and the country's central bank, citing people familiar with the matter.

Minister pledges new civil service evaluation scheme in weeks

The Greek government, which has riled lenders recently with the reversal of some reforms in the public sector, said that it will introduce a new assessment scheme for civil servants within a month.



Speaking at the Economist conference in Athens on Thursday, Alternate Minister for Administrative Reform Giorgos Katrougalos said that the evaluation system to be brought in by the government would aim to improve the performance of civil servants. Katrougalos claimed the scheme introduced by the previous coalition sought to punish workers.

Katrougalos said that Athens has signed agreements with the French and Swedish governments for the exchange of know-how in order to develop the assessment scheme.

"Greek society has a hostile attitude toward the state, which it does not trust," said the minister. "The changes that we are working on are aimed at improving the performance of the public administration and restoring its image in the eyes of citizens."

The government has angered creditors by reversing some of the previous government's sackings in the civil service and abandoning a mobility scheme. However, Katrougalos said on Thursday that a new mobility program would be introduced, mostly targeting the health, education and welfare sectors.

Katrougalos claimed that the reforms passed by the previous government were not genuine and were only implemented so Greece could get through the troika reviews.

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SYRIZA feeling the pain

SYRIZA is feeling the pain of its transformation from a revolutionary party to a systemic one and, what's more, to a party of the European mainstream, and this is a problem that the party chief, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, will have to manage. It was Tsipras who elevated the people's expectations to such lofty levels; it was Tsipras who oversaw the process that led to a "compromise" in Brussels; finally, it was Tsipras who tried to change the way that Europe acts toward our bankrupt country – with little success.



SYRIZA's biggest advantage over the mainstream Greek parties is that the left is extremely durable when it comes to discussions and analyses. Yesterday's meeting of the parliamentary group lasted more than 10 hours, with Tsipras having to explain himself the entire time.

The difference with his predecessor, conservative Premier Antonis Samaras, was that the latter would announce his decisions to his party's MPs.

The kind of language of compromise that is coming from Brussels is peculiar, but it is thanks to the fact that it is vague and incomprehensible – to the layman – that a convergence of sorts has been reached between Athens and the eurozone, which has allowed all parties to save face and for everyone to seem like a winner in their respective countries.

On the surface it appears that the new agreement is aimed at enforcing certain terms of the memorandum that have fallen to the wayside over the past five years. Cracking down on tax evasion and clamping down on corruption and vested interests are measures our creditors had demanded from the start that were never enforced.

Under pressure to secure financing, the coalition government of SYRIZA and Independent Greeks has only one option: to complete the memorandum and to iron out the political and economic kinks that have amassed over decades. SYRIZA's role as a systemic force in Europe is to crush the Metapolitefsi establishment which formed in the period after the fall of the dictatorship, which is what the lenders wanted to see done as soon as Greece entered the bailout program.


Of course SYRIZA also has its voters to think about and the battle on this front does not promise to be bloodless. But the problem is that Greece has no money and cannot meet its commitments in the coming months as Brussels has said that no more funds will be released unless its terms are met.

We shouldn't jump the gun. The system is flexible and the first order of business is for the eurozone's parliaments to approve the agreement. The only thing that's certain in the meantime is that the nightmare is not over for Greece.



Vladimir Putin has admitted for the first time that the plan to annex Crimea was ordered weeks before the referendum on self-determination. Crimea was formally absorbed into Russia on 18 March, to international condemnation, after unidentified gunmen took over the peninsula.

THE LAW OFFICE OF GEORGE C. XAMPLAS • 25 E WASHINGTON ST, SUITE 700, CHICAGO, IL 60602 • (312) 345-0510




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