

# A TIME OF REFLECTION FOR THE GREEKS OF THE DIASPORA

The Voice from the Pavement - Peter Adamis - 2011



Pellana is only a small village in Laconia, Peloponnese. What does it mean to the youth of today in the Diaspora.

Nothing to the many unless they now of its past history and how it influenced the ancient Hellenic world and modern Western society.

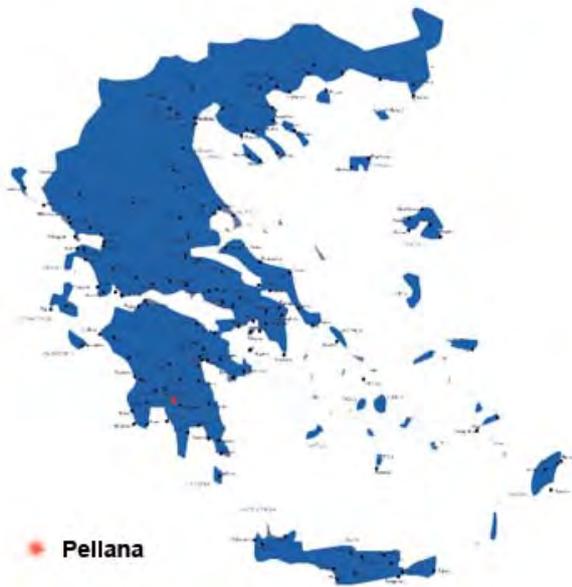
One can easily dismiss a little town tucked away in the midst of towering mountains and astride the once mighty river Evrotas in the heartland of Lakonia, Peloponnese. It is just a small town, insignificant to many but yet it has yielded sons and daughters that have contribute much to the world as we know it. From Doctors, Scientists, Businessmen and women, Political leaders, Armed Forces, Mathematicians, Professors, Para military personal. Authors and many other professions of which many are now living outside of the village and throughout the world.

Today being the year 2011, one takes the time to reflect upon the past and ones heart and mind invariably takes them back to their place of origin. A place where much bloodshed has been shed throughout the centuries, a place where people were uprooted more than once and only to be populated again and again. Not only to this small village, but to all the other villages similar to that of Pellana. This may be but a small town or village one may say, but what does it mean to the Greeks living in the Diaspora.

Each village during the Greek Civil War may be seen saw the last time that blood was shed, but then many forget about the right wing government and the coup of the Colonels in 1967. It was also a time when people suspected of left wing sympathise were again rounded up and relocated to island prisons. A time when no one knew who their friends were and if one happened to have friends on both sides; they were made to choose or were cautioned to stay clear of one side or the other.

One may also ask why bring up the past and resurrect the ghosts of the past. Why bring up wounds that will not heal or even mention the horrors that were conducted in and around the surrounding villages. To heal a wound, one has to apply the appropriate medicine, provide the care and rest to ensure a full recovery. Many were not given the opportunity and left their homes for new places abroad.

Many would never return and their bones lie in their new resting places as far away as Australia, Argentina, and Canada and in some cases South Africa and Russia. Those that decided to return permanently even for a holiday were not always greeted with enthusiasm or with a warm welcome in fear that they may be returning back for their patriarchal inheritance.



The lucky ones are those who either had a new home in the town of Pellana and visited their home every year or visited the town occasionally or every two years depending on one's finances. The village mentality for those Greek returning was still the same.

They had to show that they had made it good in the new country and that it was an unwritten rule that when they returned they had to provide gifts or at least buy a round of drinks and prepare a table for those in the village or their relatives. This happens even today.

In the early years when those who had left the village, it was not uncommon to send back to those who remained, money, clothing and gifts to sustain them through the difficult early years when the fledging Hellenic republic was still reeling and recovering from WW2 and the Greek Civil war. These much need and unwritten or spoken gifts assisted those who lived in the village until such time that the people of Greece were able to raise their standard of living to a moderate level that was sustainable.

If one can put aside the negative and/or illegal aspects of the Colonels regime and agree to disagree regarding their methods, one cannot but agree that the programs and the projects that they started during their time in power had positive results for the people. Electricity, Roads, Water, Hospitals, Educational and other basic facilities were created in most if not all parts of the Greek homeland. This author does not condone nor denigrate the colonels in power but merely stating his point of view from his own perspective.

The author visited the village of Pellana in 1973 whilst serving as an Australian soldier stationed in Singapore and Malaya. The observations made then when compared with today vary greatly with the latter years observations in the negative.

In 1973, the streets of Athens were clean, no graffiti, people were hospitable, Electricity and water was being installed, and educational facilities were almost in every village and the government facilities and department operating at their utmost efficiency. As the years went by and the Colonels were toppled from power, Greece went into a maelstrom of political upheavals which are still being felt today.

Entering the European Union was a smart move, but not smart enough to ensure that when they changed over to the Euro that the value of the Drachma was not overvalued. This minor matter has brought Greece to its knees all for the sake of getting rich quick without a thought for the future. Yes, for a while life was good and many made their fortunes, to the point where money was not an option, while all the time foreigners or those in and outside the European Union were buying up properties, business, facilities and other organisations.

As result of this inflow of foreign money, the people in the villages flocked to the major towns which swelled the population creating a housing boom in the guise of high rise buildings without any thought for parking spaces or other amenities that most major cities take for granted.



The financial deficit in the mean time grew and inflation became a major problem. Loans were remortgaged and new measures put into place to ensure their sustainability.

People were either not aware of the dangers or had blinkers on their faces ensuring that their minds were not on the problem that they were facing.

When suddenly the pressure was put on and Greece asked to cough up their loans and/or to make the necessary interest, everyone but a few panicked. This opinion was not only confined to Greece but also to Portugal, Italy Spain, Ireland and even the United Kingdom. Greece wore the bad end of the stick and became the laughing stock of the European Union.

One forgets easily what Greece experienced during WW2 at the hands of the Italians and the Germans. Compensations and reparations for the damage to Greece have never been made, something which many have conveniently overlooked. When the Olympic games was in progress, Greece was made to appear the laughing stock again by the world press who had nothing better to do other than to criticise Greece.



Their criticism was based on the fact that the infrastructures were ready for the games and for being a potential haven for terrorists. Something which never happened in either cases or the end result was lack of visitors which put the Olympic Games organisers in Greece in much debt.

Today Greece is being displayed to the world as a country that cannot meet its financial responsibilities despite its attempts to curb spending. The author wonders, how many people realise exactly what is happening in Greece today. Do they know that people are starving and have no work, Are they aware that people have no homes to live in due to their lack of finances? Do people know that there are thousands who "go to work", remain there and do their quota of work knowing that they will not get paid.

They go to work because it gives them a sense of self respect, know that they are doing their bit for the economy and hoping that they will be offered a job, no matter how small, but a job. It is about time that the Greeks in the Diaspora realise the hidden pain and suffering that Greece and its people are going through at the moment.

Greece at the moment is at the mercy of those countries that have the capacity to provide the support necessary to ensure Greece has the structures in place to ensure its survivability and being given the opportunities to have a sustainable economy that will be able to repay its debts over time.

One solution that may not be as farfetched as one would like to think and that is that those with a Hellenic background who now live overseas, come forth and buy back Greece from the brink of financial disaster. Don't let foreign countries gobble up the territory. A territory that took many years of hardship wars, bloodshed and anguish to make Greece a country free for its citizens. Imagine if the debt that Greece owes to the European Union is sold to a country that is on less than favourable terms politically, geographically and/or financially.

What then. Do we come a full circle? What does this mean to the little town of Pellana in the Peloponnese, a little town like many others that dot the Hellenic landscape? Will they all be gobbled up and forgotten, because we who live in the exterior close our eyes to their misery. Where are the bold orators and fighters of yesteryear, where are the men and women who sacrificed their lives for a Greece that stands alone today. Will the heroes and heroines still to be found amongst the leaders and the youth of today? This is the real challenges that face the Greeks abroad. Will they stand idly by and see their place of origin sink slowly into the mire.

*Postscript: Much has occurred since 2011, political parties have been under scrutiny, austerity measures being implemented, hardships influencing most walks of Hellenic society, taxation, laws and regulations being enforced, tax diggers and corrupt individuals taken to court. Numerous unreported suicides, a reduction in the public service and pensions, a dedicated law enforcement and armed forces in support of the Government and a myriad of other forced readjustments on a society well known for its happy go life attitude.*

*I have said this on many occasions that I have great faith in the Hellenic people and believe that they will overcome this financial catastrophe. They are resilient and tough people when the going is great. It will just take time for the readjustments to take effect and become embedded in the Hellenic psychic.*



**The Voice from the Pavement** - Peter Adamis is a (not for profit) Journalist/Commentator. He is a retired Australian military serviceman and an Industry organisational & Occupational (OHS) & Training Consultant whose interests are within the parameters of domestic and international political spectrum. He is an avid blogger and contributes to domestic and international community news media outlets as well as to local and Ethnic News. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Learning & Development (Monash), Grad Dip Occupational Health & Safety, (Monash), Dip. Training & Assessment, Dip Public Administration, and Dip Frontline Management. Contact via Email: [abalinx@netspace.net.au](mailto:abalinx@netspace.net.au) or via Mobile: 0409965538