

International Society of Friends of Nikos Kazantzakis

SYNTHESIS

INFORMATION BULLETIN



Sketch by Takis Kalmouhos, 1929

My anxiety is found in this: to incessantly strive for this position and from antithesis to find Synthesis.

Nikos Kazantzakis, Aegina, 12/2/1944

No 55 - April 2021

CONTENTS

- Main article.
- An unpublished work of Nikos Kazantzakis: *The Ascent*.
- The review «Le Regard crétois» No. 48, December 2021.
- Texts of our writer.
- The priorities of the next three years.
- Arts.
- The operation of the ISFNK.
- Publications: 2020 and 2021.
- Nikos Kazantzakis' nominations for the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- Events.
- Acknowledgments.
- Donations to «Le Regard croissant».
- In Memoriam.
- ISFAHAN: contacts.

MAIN ARTICLE

Our members and friends, despite all the known difficulties, are continuing their activities: Ottawa, Montreal, Buenos Aires, Dublin, Commotion, Larisa, Irrational, Copenhagen...Are mentioned in the following pages. We warmly thank them and congratulate them.

«THE ASCENT», A KAZANTZAKIS' UNPUBLISHED WORK

It must, by all means, be read. He relates in this fictional work his marriage to a Jewish woman, his return to Crete and the description of the conditions in the island due to the various foreign occupations. It was published in Paris by Tambourines publications, translated by Rene Boucher.

LE REGARD CRETONNES, H KPHTIKH MATIA, THE CRETAN GLANCE, LA MIRADA CRETENSEN

Contents of issue 48 - December 2021

In Kazantzakis' texts, his opinions on the Greek Revolution of 1821, whose 200th anniversary we are celebrating this year, are stated.

As far as studies are concerned, we have already received three:

- Pipina Elles, Sydney: *The Presence of Women in Kazantzakis' Plays* (in English)
- Dimitris Kokoris, Thessaloniki: *Kazantzakis as a poet* (in Greek)
- Cristina Tsardikos, Buenos Aires: *Borges and Kazantzakis, two writers one labyrinth* (in Spanish)

Each study includes a synopsis in the other three languages. Finally, the translations and studies about the great Cretan are referenced.

The Steering Committee has appointed a new Editing Committee which consists of:

- Yvette Renoux-Herbert, director of publishing (France)
- George Stasinakis, chief editor (Switzerland)
- Members: Peter Bien (USA), Katerina Zografistou (Greece), Yannis Roussos (Canada), Vanta Papaioannou-Voutsas (Greece), Margarita Larriera (Uruguay), Helena Gonzales-Vaqueurizo (Spain).

TEXTS OF NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS

Excerpts from Eleni Kazantzakis' book
«The Uncompromising»

Happiness

A good recipe to find happiness...is a) a clear conscience, b) to passionately love something, anything, in life, c) to never break a person's heart

... «When a man and a woman are together, the heavens are rejoicing». Perhaps this is man's greatest joy on earth. The only happiness, which as long as it lasts it's not a utopia.

Odyssey

What position does Odysseus take on the problem: Individual - Collective. Whatever my answer is, it seems to me that the answer restricts Odysseus intention, because in this way I would imprison his cry into a definite, in other words restricted, formulation, which today could satisfy the more progressive, but tomorrow or the day after will seem conservative even to the retarded. Odysseus above all is a general rallying cry, whose interpretation depends on different epochs...

And the secret of every rallying cry which is not «melody» but «symphony» is, he who can accept it and experience it, succeeds in giving the solution to every problem, to the extent of his extreme power. Somebody superior, accepting and experiencing the same rallying cry, will give his own solution that could be different from the other, but will follow the same ascending direction - different paths towards the same Ascent...And this is why Odysseus is above racial restrictions, citizen of tomorrow's (any tomorrow's) state.

...Odyssey's aim is to be read without fail by the youth. This work wasn't written for the old, it was written for the youth and even for the unborn as well.

From the point of view of poetic form and poetic content, «Odyssey» represents the highest peak, which I could attain, and after an entire life in the service of the spiritual.

Letter to Panait Istrati

You Panait, beloved Lazarus, who doesn't even need Christ, oh super Lazarus, hail!

What a joy to live in this lump of the earth and to love! To love this devil of a rebel who has a pencil in his rear and after every stance he finds himself always erect! Hail, oh brother, oh companion in tricks, oh eternal Odysseus!

I'm leaving in three days for China and Japan... I will return in five months, but till then I offer you my little house... in Aegina, next to the sea, a magnificent beach. Come, beloved Panait, you will be happy with this new woman of dazzling beauty, with the laughter and the dangerous teeth! [This is reference to Bilili, sister of the Hellenist and ethnomusicologist from Geneva, Samuel Baud-Bovy]. We are happy us two, the only happy ones in this world, because we play with fire and we don't have a need but our marvelous heart, the insatiable and bloodied one. We devour it every day but it gets reborn every night, we are Prometheus-es and simultaneously the eagles of the Prometheus-es: we are complete beings.

Resistance

Thrasivoulos Androudilakis [director of prisons in Aegina] is getting ready to secretly take to the mountains. Kazantzakis pleads with him to tell the partisans that he is willing to go and join them...

Loneliness and traveling

You know my ideal, eight months loneliness and work and four months traveling.

...I owe everything to loneliness. I would be nothing if I lacked loneliness.

I yearn for the Orient, a stroll along Tigris and Euphrates, an ascent to Tibet, an excursion to Central Africa. That's where untold riches are, there are thousands of verses awaiting like bunches of bananas. I have to go...

Kinship

Thank God, the Cretans are not Greeks. I rejoice inside me in my African blood, I work with faith, with stubbornness and simultaneously just as I like it, without hope of reward.

...I feel a very deep kinship to Africa...

My life

... When I die some biographer of mine will write -the idiot- that I was of an ascetic disposition, with few desires, a man who lived comfortably in abandonment and poverty. And nobody would know that if I ended up an «ascetic» it's because it wasn't convenient for me to live my true nature and because I again preferred nakedness to the cheap bourgeois demeaning livery.

Letter to Eleni

Your care touches me and I can't wait for when to fall gravely ill or to be in peril, so that I would have the pleasure of being taken care by you. What I always lacked, so that I become liked by those very close to me, is the illnesses, the impression I would give, the people who love me would shudder at the thought of suddenly losing me, that I'm a human being too, my heart is not of stone and the earth could open up for me too and swallow me...

Solidarity

If a child is hungry somewhere at the other end of the earth we should feel that we are to blame and to suffer with it... We should always be right at the right time... We should have an African heart and a European brain...

Letter from England

«A dangerous forest inhabited by wild boars, bulls and wolves» that's how an old chronographer described the area, where unbearable, sprawling Manchester is now spread over. That's how it was then and that's how it is today. This is the face of our industrial civilization: menacing, without human tenderness, ruthless and bitter. You stare at the antihills of people, who walk up and down, brutal and hurried, the depressing streets and you are overwhelmed by anxiety: perhaps you are having a scary dream? Perhaps a collective nightmare is afflicting humanity?

Chania

Chania is picturesque - narrow lanes, Turkish shops, palm trees, beaches, rocks, clever people, mosques, orange trees, worry and interest for world matters, provincial boredom, fat ladies, amanés and an unbearable smell of burnt oil in the kitchens.

Minister without portfolio in Sofoulis government

How tired I am and how much I suffer, I cannot say. Everybody is besieging me in order to appoint them somewhere... and I talk to the President, I run, I struggle... At the same time I'm collecting material on America - studies, articles, photographs, budget films, etc. I leave home at 7:30 (without eating anything because my sister Eleni happens to be late) and I return sometime at midnight. All my friends rely on me and I do whatever I can.

...Thousands of «men of the world» are asking to take part in the expedition to America, I'm afraid the makeup will be awful if the President does not intervene. I see him often, but funds are scarce and he's always promising to give me some time...

... Many want to become academics... they want medals, rewards, positions, missions, and they entrust in me their wishes and hopes. And they are very tiresome, because, as usually, I carry out their wishes and mine and when I don't succeed I consider it my personal failure...

OUR PRIORITIES

In the previous issue of Synthesis, we presented the decisions of the International General Assembly with regards to the creation of working groups. Two coordinators are already working on the following topics: «Kazantzakis and nature» (Vanta Papaioannou-Voutsas) and «Kazantzakis' meetings and correspondence with non-Greek writers and artists» (Elena Avramidou, [email:eleavramdou@gmail.com](mailto:eleavramdou@gmail.com)). Please get in touch with them, in order to offer suggestions or take part in one of these working groups

ARTS

√ *Crete*. The Prefecture of Crete, in cooperation with other regions, will stage *Captain Michalis* in opera form, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution. Sifis Miheloyannis, president of the Greek Chapter, has stated ISFNK's support in this significant initiative.

√ *Brussels*. Aristidis Lavrentzos is the director of the «Thespis» theatre troupe. An admirer of Kazantzakis' work and well versed in it, he staged *Christopher Columbus* in 2004-2006. This year, on the occasion of the 200 years of the National Rebirth, he will stage *Capodistrias*. Niki Stavrou, the intellectual property owner, the entire ISFNK, especially the Belgian chapter with Paulina Markopoulos as president, congratulate him and wish him great success.

OPERATION OF THE ISFNK

- New officers:
 - New Zealand, George Kosmadakis (Wellington).
 - Australia, Leonidas Naoumis (Brisbane).
- Steering Committee. Met on-line on December 6, 2020 and examined the various activities of the ISFNK. The next meeting will take place in May of 2021.

PUBLICATIONS

Unpublished work of Kazantzakis

- *The Ascent*, Kazantzakis publications, Athens 2021. It was translated from Greek to French by René Bouchet and was published in 2021 in Paris by Cambourakis publications.

Translations

- *Odyssey*, translated from Greek to Italian by Nicola Crocetti, Fratinelli-Crocetti publications, Milan 2020. The 3rd publication is in circulation!

- «Conversations Kazantzakis-Sipriot». Translated from French to Greek by Maria Fletoridou. It will be published this year by Kastaniotis publications.

Studies

- Dimitris Kokoris, *Kazantzakis as a poet*, Pedio Scientific Publishing, Athens 2020.
- George Stasinakis, *Life's paths, in the footprints of Nikos Kazantzakis, 1989-2019*, Kapa Publishing, Athens 2020.

KAZANTZAKIS AND THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

He was nominated nine times by many intellectuals:

- In 1947, by the professor of the Athens University School of Philosophy, Nikos Vey.
- In 1950, by Hjalmar Gullberg of the Swedish Academy.
- In 1951, by the Swedish writer Sigfrid Siwertz.
- In 1952, by the Union of Norwegian Writers
- In 1953, by the president of the Union of Norwegian Writers, Hans Heiberg.
- In 1954, by Henry Olsson of the Swedish Academy.
- In 1955, with two nominations, one by Lorentz Eckhoff of the University of Oslo and the other by the Society of Greek Writers.
- In 1956, with three nominations, one by the Society of Greek Writers, the second by Johannes Andreasson Dale, professor at the University of Oslo and the third by Samuel Baud-Bovy, professor of Greek and Ethnomusicologist at the University of Geneva.
- In 1957, with two nominations, one by the Society of Greek Writers and the other by Samuel Baud-Bovy.

EVENTS

«International Reading Club»

It was founded in Iraklion in 2018 with the participation of the Iraklion Esperinos General Lyceum and the members of the Local Chapter of the ISFNK. Since then, many works of Nikos Kazantzakis have been studied. Those in charge are Katerina Zografistou, Maria Zahariaki and Sofia Ntalampeki. Since December of 2020, it successfully organized with the cooperation of the Iraklion Police Officers Reading Club, in particular, and the Experimental Lyceum and other groups, the following events: January 24, *Captain Michalis*, February 21, *Traveling in Japan and China* and March 3, *Zorba the Greek*. It's worth noting that Reading Clubs have been founded or will be founded in Dublin, Buenos Aires, Ottawa and Copenhagen.

Other activities

- *Montreal, April 13, 2021*. The Local Chapter of the ISFNK, with Chrysoula Petimeza as president, organized with great success a soirée dedicated to the *Return of the Prodigal* from *Report to Greco*.
- *Buenos Aires, March 26, 2021*. In the framework of the International Seminars on Greek Civilization and History, Christina Tsardikou, the energetic president of the «Nostos» association and of the Argentinian Chapter of the ISFNK,

gave a lecture entitled «Borges and Kazantzakis, two writers, one labyrinth». We remind you that on October 22, 2018, professor Maria Kodama, president of the Borges Institute and George Stasinakis, signed at the National University of Buenos Aires a memorandum of cooperation. Present were Mr. Dimitri Zevelekis, the Greek ambassador, Christina Tsardikou and a lot of people.

• *Ottawa, April 4, 2021.* Cathy Dimitriou and Yannis Rousos of the Local Chapter of the ISFNK organized a zoom meeting of the local Reading Club and presented excerpts from *Christ Recrucified*. It was a great success. The next presentation will take place next October with readings from *Captain Michalis*.

• *Larissa, February 20, 2021.* The Local Chapter of the ISFNK, with the dynamic Nikos Skenteris, vice president of the Greek Chapter of the ISFNK and member of the Steering Committee, organized on-line, thanks to the town's municipality and in cooperation with the Cultural Centre of Educationalists (POKEL), a soirée dedicated mainly to the presentation of POKEL's review «Λεξωτεχνίες» dedicated to Kazantzakis and to George Stasinakis' book «Life's paths, in the footprints of Nikos Kazantzakis», with an introduction by Peter Bien.

• *Dublin and Komotini, February 10, 2021.* Excerpts relating to Crete's nature from *Captain Michalis* were read by Vanta Papaioannou-Voutsas, member of the ISFNK Steering Committee, during an on-line presentation of the Irish-Greek Association. The idea was proposed by Stella Xenopoulou, member of the Irish chapter of the ISFNK.

• *Bologna, April 10, 2021.* In the framework of the celebrations for the Greek Revolution, the town's Greek community invited Marie Luigia Di Stefano, educator, to speak on *Captain Michalis and the Cretan Revolution of 1898, Freedom or Death*. The Italian chapter of the ISFNK, with president Gilda Tentorio, supported this event.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- *Iraklion, March 6, 2021.* In a moving event, Katerina Zografistou, member of the ISFNK Steering Committee, conferred on Nikos Kazantzakis Museum, on the Historical Museum of Crete, on Sofia Ntalampeki, general secretary of the Greek Chapter of the ISFNK and special counsel on modern means of communication and on Esperinos Lyceum of Iraklion, special honours for the promotion of Kazantzakis's work and the ISFNK's activities.

- *Chile, Santiago.* Professor Miguel Castillo Didier, director of the Centre for Hellenic Studies, translator, especially of Kazantzakis' *Odyssey* and of other Greek writers, is nominated to be awarded the «National Prize for Letters and Social Sciences». The ISFNK actively supports this distinction that he so much merits.

DONATIONS TO «REGARD CRETOIS»

- Cyprus Chapter, Nicosia.
- Switzerland Chapter, Geneva.
- Brisbane Chapter, Australia
- Manolis Velivasakis, Florida, USA.
- George Stasinakis, Meyrin, Switzerland.

We warmly thank them.

IN MEMORIAM

The death of four members of the ISFNK caused us great sorrow.

- Cyprus: Kleri Aggelidou, former Minister of Culture and Education, poet and honorary member of the ISFNK
- Greece: Maurice Born, writer and publisher. He re-published in French in 1993 Eleni Kazantzakis' book «The Uncompromising», in Canevas and Aire publications.
- Portugal: José Silvino Rebello Mata, secretary of the local Chapter of the ISFNK.
- Switzerland: George Rahoulis, translator.

Our sincere condolences to their families.

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