



PAXOS MUNICIPALITY



Cultural Village
of Europe
2004

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News Letter

No2

An extract of the letter that Mr Vartholomeos, the Patriarch of Konstantinople sent to the Mayor of Paxos

The following is an extract of the letter Mr Vartholomeos, the Patriarch of Konstantinople sent to the Mayor of Paxos, Mr Spyros Bogdanos. In it he explains the reason why he could not make the trip to Paxos for the opening ceremonies of the "Paxos, Cultural Village of Europe 2004" Organization, although he had originally gladly accepted the invitation and to wish all the participants and especially the Mayor of Paxos the very best success to their efforts.

".....The title of the "Cultural Village of Europe" will attract the attention not only of the Europeans but also of the Greeks all over the world towards your island, which is small but not less important among its brother -Ionian islands and of the rest of the Greek islands, as your island preserves many of its virgin elements, not only environmental but also elements of character of its noble inhabitants, who never cease to be proud of Paxos and who put their island above all other great and powerful cities. The old humorous rime that your people have created expresses all the above:" Paxi and Adipaxi equals sixteen Londons".

You must safeguard what you have with zeal; the island's character, your cultural heritage and yours and your fathers faith to Christ, the heritage left to you by the Apostles Gaios and Crispos, the beautiful Ionian customs, all elements of which the Paxiot personality is made of. Protect your island's environment on earth and sea and your traditional cultivations. Resist the temptation of total assimilation,



what is better known as "globalisation". You are Europeans but also Greeks and more particularly Ionians and Paxiots. You must never forget that".

SUNDAY

On Sunday the 18th of April the official opening ceremony of the events for the "Paxi, Cultural Village of Europe, 2004" took place in the Municipality's Council Meeting Hall with the Parliament Members Mr Nikos Dendias and Mrs Angela Gerekou, the Corfu Prefect Mr Giorgos Mahimaris, the Vice Mayor Mr. Elias Bouzoukis, the Chairman of the Technical Chamber Mr Nikos Spiggos and the Member of the Corfu Prefecture Council Mr. Giorgos Dimas as some of our honored guests.



BOAT PROCESSION IN LOGGOS



WATER THROUGH THE AGES

Saturday the 17th of April 2004 a conference with "Water through the ages" as its theme took place in the Municipality Council's meeting Hall in Gaios, as part of the events "Paxi, Cultural Village of Europe 2004". Delegations from 11 European villages (Aldeburgh-England, Mellionec-France, Stroebeck-Germany, Kircheim-Austria, Porrúa-Spain, Wijk aan Zee-Holland, Bystre-Check Republik, Kilingi Nomme-Estonia, Pergine Valdarno-Italy, Tommerup-Denmark and Paxi-Greece) and a representative from the greek department of the non - Governmental, ecological, international Organization WWF took part in the above conference.



Spyros Bogdanos

The Paxos Mayor Mr Spyros Bogdanos during his presentation speech stated that water has always been a basic element of the birth, history, evolution, traditions and culture of Paxos.

Thanks to the Paxiots' hard work and persistence they managed to turn the permanent disadvantage of scarce water resources into an important cultural factor and an example of sustainable

use of water resources through the constant invention of methods for the collecting and preserving of water. Today due to the low rain falls and to the parallel increase of water consumption because of tourism and excessive building, the quality of underground water has deteriorated. The two large water reservoirs of the island are unable to meet the needs for water during the summer season, so water is bought and carried from mainland Greece.

Some houses have been connected to the main water system, but many still rely solely on their own water cisterns. Necessary funds have not yet been found in order to materialize the planning of a central sewage system. The municipality's goal is to raise more funds to expand the main water system, and to launch campaigns promoting to both locals and tourists the need for saving water.



Irene Gerlofsma

The Wijk aan Zee representative explained

how although Holland is blessed with enough water, its excessive use from the metal industries has led to an enormous increase of water consumption and to pollution of the rivers. Wijk aan Zee is surrounded by enormous sand-dune areas, which have been traditionally used to filter water and despite the fact that they

are characterized protected areas, they are still in grave danger. The Wijk aan Zee inhabitants – in their effort to protect them and promote milder treatment for them – face high bureaucratic barriers, put up by two large national industries, who practically own most of the area surrounding their village.

The Aldeburgh representative

underlined the fact of excessive consumption of underground water resources in her area, because of population growth – especially during the tourist season – and of increasing agricultural needs and blamed the central administration for encouraging more constructions in the



Sue Bentley



Ferdinand Reindl



Hans Hurtle
Διερμηνέας: Margareth Lardshneider



Mrs Arianna Dimitropoulou, a well known journalist and spokeswoman welcomed the delegations members and introduced the opening speech by the Mayor of Paxos.

area without caring about water availability and for promoting environmentally and financially expensive solutions to the problem.

The local representative

Stroebeck's administration presented the water supply system and the sewage system in West Germany in general and the improvements taking place during the last decade in the east part of his country. His municipality is part of an association of 30 other neighbouring municipalities that manages both the water supply and sewage systems. During the last 10 years this association has succeeded 100% household - connection to the central supply system, excellent water quality, stable prices annually subsidized per inhabitant, its financial independence, the construction of a high technology sewage plant financed by annual contributions per square meter of ownership and the keeping of prices low for the consumers at the same time.



Dennis Loeffke

these changes starting in the '90s, water level in the local reservoirs increased and the negative results of soviet attitude towards the environment were slightly reversed. But in order to materialize the planning of new water supply systems and to help the more remote households to install private sewage systems, the need for more funding and new technologies is still pressing.

The WWF representative, Mrs Eleni Svorou,

concluded that Greece faces a grave problem of water quantities and especially of an uneven division of water resources because of uncontrollable water consumption for agricultural purposes on a national level and of excessive touristic development on a local level. She then proposed the following solutions: a) work on the local level, b) even development between the various economy sectors, c) viable development inside each sector. A necessary presupposition for an even development would be the protection of the natural and constructed environment, with main priority that of saving water and then moving on to taking other measures, like drilling for water, building dams etc. Paxos authorities must invest in the preservation of the local collecting water techniques that make interesting tourist sites at the same time. Viable development could be achieved by biological farming, producing of local label products, moderate fishing, eco and cultural tourism. Tourism centered around ecology and culture sends a strong message to visitors about being on an island, where the environment is respected by local authorities. That way most of them find it difficult to behave contrary to the general feeling.



The Chairman of the Council Board of Kilingi Nomme

explained that his area's water supply system is becoming modernized, the water leaks and household consumption are diminishing because of less industrial water use, less population, awareness on behalf of the consumers, funding from abroad, reorganization of the financial system and taxation on water consumption and because of measures against pollution. Thanks to all



Kalle Kiipus

The Bystre Mayor

has similar negative experiences from soviet type politics concerning water and the environment in general. Today her country suffers from floods every winter and the area of Bystre remains with no water in the summer. Governments worldwide must start treating water with respect and promote milder and friendlier uses of its resources.



Jirina Leinweberova
Διερμηνέας: Romana Bacova

Tommerup's representative

was proud to say that his country's policy towards water was always oriented towards prevention and protection of underground water resources from pollution. Thanks to the citizens' environmental awareness and to legislation making water metering obligatory for every home, water leaks and consumption diminished down to 30% during the last 15 years. The community of Tommerup is actually very rich on water resources of excellent quality and supplies a near by town of 180.000 people with water free of charge.



Finn Brunse

The President of the Cultural Society of Pergine Valdarno

analyzed the administrative and technological aspects of water supply and sewage systems in her village and in the larger Tuscany area, where mixed firms manage both systems. The Municipality authorities keep the decision making for themselves and the private investor has the responsibility of running the company according to market rules, with a common goal of reduction of water losses and the constant modernizing of the systems. During the last few years a body corporate under public law bears the responsibility of managing the supply systems and the sewage plants of controlling the prices. Its board of directors is formed by Mayors of near by areas, who decide upon a long-term administrative program



Romina Zamponi

of water usage always keeping the environmental protection in top priority. Nowadays a public discussion has started on the need to increase the public sector control over the private one inside the water managing companies and to impose socially sensitive criteria, wherever it is necessary.

The Porrua representative

stated that his community has full knowledge of the power water has as an energy and wealth source and of the fact it is not an endless one. Water needs careful use and protection so as to allow to its manager security and prosperity for ever. So his Municipality self-manages its water resources through a self-financed Water Organization. This way it has managed to resist the dam-building policy of the central Spanish government, that proved catastrophic and to keep their environment and water resources intact. Main contributing factor to all the above is –according to their speaker – the locals' responsible and courageous behavior, their team spirit in facing their common problems.



Hulio Tames
Διερμηνέας: Maria - Christina Fernandez

The Mellionec representative

described the leading role of water in the culture and history of Brittany and commented especially on the first Celtic settlements, the Roman and Viking period and on the Napoleonic war period, when his army's engineers built river channels for defense reasons, that are still used by the locals today. Hundreds of water-mills decorate Brittany's countryside with their nowadays silent presence. Thanks to its geographical position and ground structure Brittany never had a water quantity problem. But nowadays it faces a grave quality problem, more evident on the annual reports on constantly decreasing salmon and otter populations – two animals tied with Brittany's life – because of water contamination in the area's rivers due to industrial and agricultural extensive use and pollution of water.



Jannick Bertho

Paxi, Cultural Village of Europe

2004 is the year when our country is hosting the Olympic Games and also when the European Union is becoming enlarged by ten new members. It is also the year during which our small island of Paxos is hosting a smaller scale but not of less importance European organization; the "Cultural Villages of Europe".

Twelve villages from twelve European countries meet in Paxi with a primary goal of uniting their voices to make their belief heard louder: "life in small villages is equally crucial for the future and prosperity of Europe as is life in big cities and large capitals". Agricultural development, tourism, communication, transportation, education, all types of financial activities, along with respect for the environment, history, language and traditions of local societies are main targets of the Chart they all signed in 1999 in the Dutch village of Wijk aan Zee.

The Mayors and other representatives of their local societies arrived in Gaios on Friday afternoon of the 16th of April and were welcomed by the hosting families.

"Our common problems and common goals unite us in creating a common think tank, in combined actions and perspectives, that will help turn small societies into raw models", stated the Mayor of Paxos, Mr Spyros Bogdanos while welcoming the European Mayors and



their delegations on Saturday the 17th of April at the opening of a conference with "water through the ages" as its main theme.

The delegations members prolted by the two hours midday recess to enjoy a guided tour of the Venetian fortress on St. Nicholas isle and to taste local dishes prepared by Paxiot ladies in beautiful natural surroundings, full of history.

After the conference ended, they all visited the archeological site of Magazia, with 6th and 4th century

b.C tombs and the perimeter of an ancient settlement. They then moved to the near by Cisterns, where our European guests had the chance to see ancient water tanks, curved in underground rocks, that gathered water from channels also curved on the surface of the rocks and covered by beautiful stone dome-like constructions. They also saw a specimen of modern methods of collecting water by visiting the water reservoir at the Kaki Lagada area.

A rather long day ended with an official dinner offered by our Municipality at the Paxos Beach Hotel, where the Municipality Choir, accompanied by the Municipality Orchestra, guided by the experienced maestro and our compatriot, Mr Fotis Argiros offered us many happy moments.

The next day, Sunday the 18th of April the official opening ceremony of the events for the "Paxi, Cultural Village of Europe, 2004" took place in the Municipality's Council Meeting Hall with the Parliament Members Mr Nikos Dendias and Mrs Angela Gerekou, the Corfu Prefect Mr Giorgos Mahimaris, the Vice



Mayor Mr. Elias Bouzoukis, the Chairman of the Technical Chamber Mr Nikos Spiggos and the Member of the Corfu Prefecture Council Mr. Giorgos Dimas as some of our honored guests.

Mr Spyros Bogdanos, the Mayor of Paxos having read the letters by the Patriarch of Konstantinople Mr. Vartholomeos and by the President of the Greek Republic Mr. Kostis Stefanopoulos, moved to emphasize on the main goal of the "Cultural Villages of Europe" Organization, being that of resisting against a basic rule of nature: "the larger fish eats the smaller one" and also against the fact that each one of the Organization's Members-Municipalities are considered mere specks on the World Map.

He was then followed to the podium by the Chairman of the "Cultural Villages of Europe" Organization, Mr Bert Kisjes, who bitterly accepted his failure so far to obtain any actual support from the various administration centers on both national and european levels. Each one of our special guests came to the podium to congratulate the hosting municipality for organizing the conference and the whole weekend and expressed their enthusiasm over the high aims and initiatives of the "Cultural Villages of Europe" Organization promising to contribute in any way they can.

The whole party then visited the Folk Museum of the Paxos Cultural Society and the Art Gallery, where some of the paintings of the priest Christodoulos Aronis, donated to the Municipality, are exhibited. Later they all went on board a speed boat on a small trip to the caves at the south and south west of the



island, but because of unstable weather they soon ended at Mongonisi island, where the Paxos Orchestra accompanied the Dancing Team of the Cultural Society in traditional and more previous dances under the guidance but also with the participation of Mrs Ioanna Hronopoulou.

In the afternoon of the same day after a short tour in the village of Loggos, they all visited the local artists exhibition at the Old Custom House.

A boat parade with torches to light the dark night inside the small port of Loggos, with the women of the Choir singing from inside the boats, accompanied by Paris with his accordeon was a very romantic surprise for all present. When that was finished everybody (our european guests and the locals) moved into the recently renovated, old Loggos school, where a photo exhibition is currently hosted and where the Municipality threw a dinner party.

On the morning of the 19th of April it was departure time. Everyone was very moved and that alone is a proof that although the Cultural Villages Organization may not have achieved all its goals yet, it has certainly managed to unite people participating in it.

We must not forget to thank all those who worked hard to make this very demanding weekend a big success: the Paxos Municipality Council Members and employees, the Board and members of the Paxos Cultural Society, the Dancing Team of the Cultural Society, the Maestro, who organized the Choir and the Orchestra, the members of the Choir and the Orchestra, everyone that worked to prepare the boat parade at Loggos, the ladies who prepared the lovely

local dishes, helping to turn a simple guided tour of the Venetian Fort on the St. Nicholas Isle a delicatessen experience. We must also warmly thank all those who offered their services for the transportation and the well being of our guests. Last but not least we would like to thank all the families that gladly offered their homes, proving one more time that Paxos is a truly hospitable place.



SPONSORS OF THE LOGGOS OLD CUSTOM HOUSE EXHIBITION PROJECT

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The St. Nicholas Island



The 17th of April 2004 became a very special day for Paxos, as it was the day, when the island of St. Nicholas became accessible again for the first time after 140 years. The visit was part of the festivities of the 'Paxos, Cultural Village of Europe, 2004'. During the two hours midday recess of the conference works about "Water through the ages", the members had the chance to visit the island and enjoy a guided tour of its Venetian fortress.

In the presence of the eleven invited European Mayors Mr Ioannis Doikas, the ex director of the Paxos Historic Archive was honored by the Mayor of Paxos for his dedication to the research of the history and traditions of our island. In his speech Mr Doikas briefly presented some of the most important historic and archeological

monuments of Paxos. His speech was followed by a light lunch with local dishes, prepared by Paxiot ladies.



The Island of St. Nicholas is right in front of the Gaios port. In 1423 Baron Adam II San Ippolito received permission from Venice to build a fort on the top of its hill approximately 45 meters above sea level. The baron's land then passed under Venetian control and then to the Corlot family of Ioannis Avramis.

Originally the fort had a round shape and its entrance was to the south east, where later the mill of Kouvalias was built. It was reconstructed to its present form in 1510 under the designs of Leonardo da Vinci, designs that were recently discovered by the Italian architect and special friend of Paxos, R. Veneri in the Venetian archives. Then the entrance gate was moved to the north west side and a plateau was revealed, a relic of the ancient Greek structure of the castle. Parts of this ancient wall, built with various materials and obviously older are clearly seen today.

The minute the visitor enters the fort's perimeter he sees a large courtyard surrounded by a short round wall. To the left and right of the wall there are ruins of two story buildings that must have been barracks. In the center and a bit to the left there is the Venetian water reservoir and to the right the English rectangular more recent one, from where the soldiers and occasional defenders of the fort got fresh water. The two turrets at the corners of the wall, exactly where the ancient Greek part of the wall integrates inside the Venetian one, are of unknown origins. One turret must have been a prison. The other, underneath the plateau's level - the only point from where one can see the small dock, dated back to the Venetian period - must have been an ammunition store room.

After 411 years under Venetian rule in 1797, the Venetians finally surrender the "Eptanisa", the seven Ionian Islands to the Republican French, who govern for two years.

During the period named "the Ionian State" (1800-1807) the castle and the island were under the orders of sublieutenant Arbamenkof and a Russian guard defended the fort.

The English garrison stayed there until 1864, when Paxos along with the rest of the Ionian Islands were returned officially to Mainland Greece.

During the war and particularly between 1940 and 1941 the locals used to look out from the fort for Italian bomber planes to alert the people to take cover. In 1943 during the Italian garrison's retreat, the small English cannons were stolen.

The fort's condition nowadays is fairly good. One can still see the ammunition depot, the Venetian water reservoir in excellent condition and the English one with slight damages, the towers (guardiolas), the barracks, the roofless side-rooms and the cannons almost ready to fire.

The pines were planted in the '30s by a group of schoolchildren under the supervision of Nikos Boikos (Bitsitsis), who had the original idea of turning the island into the green heaven that it now is.

The Paxos Municipality has already started a program for the development of the island, which includes among other activities the installation of a fire protection system, the cleaning of the forest and the path, restoration of the fort etc.

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