

Local author educates on pivotal 20th-century Greek history

Just when you think you know a little something about history, along comes a book full of surprises. Truth be told, I knew nothing about the rescue of hundreds of thousands of Greek refugees from the quay at Smyrna in 1922. For the Greek community, this event, I'm told by Christos Papoutsy, is as significant as Hiroshima or Pearl Harbor, a war tragedy of earth-shaking proportions.

Papoutsy, of Rye Beach, spent 10 years researching the Smyrna Catastrophe, in which many died before many were saved through evacuation. His book, "Ships of Mercy," tells the story of how these refugees came to be in Smyrna, what happened to them there, and how some of them, in the end, escaped.

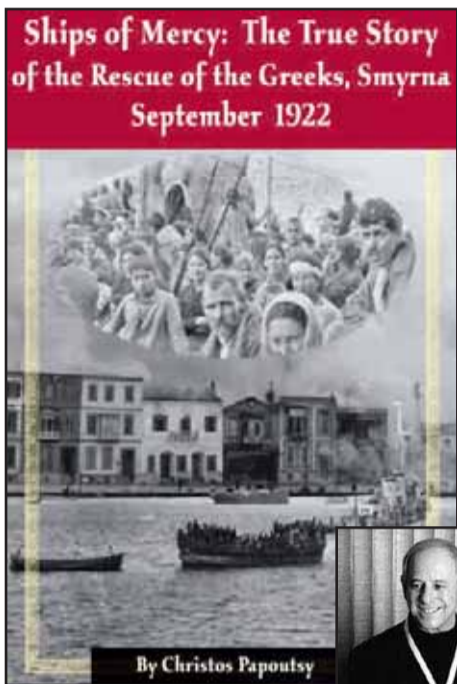
Background in a nutshell: After World War I, many peace settlements were implemented as territory was divided up. In these settlements, as in the war, there were winners and losers.

Among the Allied countries gaining territory was Greece, which sought to have her ancestral lands of eastern Thrace, Smyrna, and other sections of Asia Minor restored. The Italians, miffed at not receiving certain lands that they desired, decided to seize them by force. They landed soldiers on the Adalia coast and began heading north toward Smyrna. Because the Greeks had the closest Allied garrison (in Macedonia), the Allied powers asked them to head off the Italian maneuver. The Greeks complied, and quickly occupied Smyrna.

This angered the Turks who launched a revolution, kicking out the sultan who'd cooperated with the Allies, and precipitating the Greco-Turkish conflict of 1920-1922.

Enraged at their empire being chopped up, Turkish rebels called for a "Turkey for the Turks" and pledged to fight to retain their lands. Their battle cry also brooked no tolerance for non-Turks or Christians, and turned a fight over territory into a far bloodier conflict over race and religion.

Driven from their homes and lands by the Turks, Greeks and others fled toward the sea, "flight was their only hope," and ended up crowded on the quay at Smyrna. For nearly 30 days, they baked under the hot sun and suffered perishing thirst, hunger, and brutality. For nearly 30 days they prayed for rescue. Papoutsy documents that rescue in "Ships of Mercy." He and his wife traveled the world — Italy, Greece, Turkey, France — and combed the libraries in search of the truth about Smyrna. They discovered documents — ships' records,



letters among key players, military orders — which shed light on the nature and sequence of events. They had documents translated into English. They unearthed photographs of the refugees, the ships, and Smyrna before and after the Catastrophe — a fire burned much of the city. They discovered an unsung hero, Asa Jennings, an American who facilitated the evacuation, saving thousands of lives. His firsthand account of events brings color and immediacy to the story. Here's a sample:

"I remember the exciting time I had on the morning of Sept. 13, when I was on my way to the office. I was coming through the Armenian quarter, and as ill luck would have it, fell in with a mob. There was firing on both sides, for of course, Turkish soldiers were everywhere. I had long since taken the precautionary measure of arming myself with an American flag, for that little bit of bunting was of more potential defense than any Colt automatic. Finding myself in this pleasant little party, I pulled out my flag, pinned it on, and made for the nearest wall. I finally reached it and then walked sideways for quite a distance, for I had always been

told that if you must be shot by all means avoid being shot in the back."

Jennings got his family out of the trouble zone on an American ship, then returned to Smyrna to help the refugees. And he did! It wasn't easy but he did.

Christos Papoutsy's mission was to set the record straight on the Smyrna Catastrophe. It needed to be set straight.

Sometimes myths arise and are counted as history. The widely held belief that the Greeks at Smyrna were rescued by the Japanese always struck Papoutsy, who has family connections in the region, as illogical. "What were the Japanese doing in the harbor at Smyrna?"

Other stories — that British and American ships had denied refugees safety and that sailors had pushed swimmers away or poured scalding water on them — also struck him as fishy. What really happened? In some of the stories, the United States and the Allies were said to have caused the whole mess and did nothing to help. Papoutsy didn't buy it.

In fact, according to "Ships of Mercy" (and with the amount of documentation the book provides it certainly seems like fact), America didn't start the fire, as Billy Joel might say. And, in fact, we tried to help and did. Yes, it was tricky, with complex political mazes to maneuver, but we helped big time. That's Papoutsy's well researched message.

He wrote the book in part out of national pride.

"Before I'm Greek," he told me, "I'm an American. I'm proud to be an American. (This book and its message are) not Republican, not Democrat, not red or blue — just American."

Just as Papoutsy traveled the world to write his book, he's traveling the world talking about it. A Greek edition will be released soon.

Rebecca Rule of Northwood reviews books by New Hampshire authors.

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Crete baby death mum Leah Andrew may go free

Baby death mum Leah Andrew could be out of jail next week - but will not be allowed home to Britain.

The mother-of-two, accused of killing her third son in a holiday hotel, will hear if her appeal against a court's decision to refuse bail has been successful at a hearing on September 15.

But even if she is bailed, her solicitor Zoe Lama told the Mirror it is extremely unlikely she will be allowed to leave Greece. Ms Lama also said strict bail conditions mean Andrew would be forced to report to a police station in Crete once a month. Her trial is not expected to begin until the end of next year. Andrew, 20, has spent the last six weeks holed up in a cell at Neopolis prison on the island. Her solicitor said that Andrew "often cries" and is now "in need of medication and supervision due to heavy depression". Prisoners at the mixed jail are allowed out of their cells for just four hours a day. Last month the Mirror revealed hundreds of Andrew's pals had launched a Facebook campaign to get her back to Britain. Friends say she is inconsolable at not being able to see her children, aged one and two. It is understood they are being looked after by family.

A Greek Council of Judges will decide on bail in a hearing next Monday that will not be open to the public or to the press. If the appeal is allowed she will have to find somewhere to live in Greece while awaiting trial. Andrew faces life imprisonment if convicted of murder, which she denies. She is accused of choking the baby after giving birth alone in her room while on holiday with pals in Malia, Crete, in July. Her sister Lydia found her with the dead child and police called to the scene arrested her.

A postmortem found the baby was born healthy. Andrew, of Hither Green, South East London, collapsed in court after a judge told her she would have to stay in jail for up to 18 months before her trial.

National Museum celebrates Greek cafe culture

The National Museum of Australia and the Hellenic Club of Canberra will celebrate the key role that Greek Australians played during the formative years of 20th Century Australian culture with special guests today. His Excellency George Zois, Ambassador for Greece and invited guests from the Greek community will attend a viewing and Greek language interpretive tour of the captivating photography exhibition **Selling an American Dream: Australia's Greek Cafe**. Most of the photographs in **Selling an American Dream: Australia's Greek Cafe** were taken by co-curator of the exhibition, Effy Alexakis. A freelance documentary photographer, she has worked with historian Leonard Janiszewski since 1982 to research and document the Greek-Australian historical and contemporary presence in both Australia and Greece.

WHAT: Selling an American Dream Greek community event

WHEN: 10.30 am Wednesday September 10, 2008

WHERE: The Hall, National Museum of Australia