

In Brief...

Firebombs target unionists, policeman in Thessaloniki

Police in Thessaloniki were seeking the perpetrators behind three bomb attacks, two on unionists and one on the home of a policeman, none of which caused injuries.

A homemade explosive device planted outside the eighth-floor apartment of Sotiris Zarianopoulos, the general secretary of a local labor union, near the city center, detonated shortly before 2 a.m. At around the same time, a similar device went off outside the home of a policeman in the district of Ambelokipi.

Shortly after 11 a.m. another homemade bomb went off outside the home of a former unionist in central Thessaloniki. The target of the attack was Dimitris Gousidis, the former head of the union representing journalists in Macedonia and Thrace. All three attacks caused limited damage but led to no injuries.

Donations hit 1.2 mln euros

A total of 1.2 million euros in donations to a telethon for the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip was handed over to Deputy Foreign Minister Spyros Kouvelis.

The cash was raised during a telethon organized by 11 bodies including labor unions and prefectural authorities in Attica. A statement issued by the General Confederation of Greek Labor (GSEE), one of the organizers, noted that “the response of our fellow citizens, and particularly of the new generation, exceeded all expectations.”

Fatal collision

An elderly couple died and their granddaughter was injured in a head-on collision between the car in which they were traveling and another vehicle on a country road on the outskirts of Sparta, in the Peloponnese.

The car being driven by the 82-year-old man is believed to have veered out of its lane and to have hit an oncoming car being driven by a 23-year-old man.

The elderly driver and his 70-year-old wife were killed instantly by the force of the crash, while their 20-year-old granddaughter and the driver of the other car sustained minor injuries.

Cable thieves

Police were seeking the perpetrators who removed about a kilometer of copper cable from a section of railway track on the route between Athens and Thessaloniki. The theft was realized by railway officials when a train en route to Thessaloniki stopped at the point where the cable had been cut shortly before 3 a.m. on Monday. The severed cables did not lead to the train suffering any damage or causing any injuries. Separately, six gunmen broke into a copper warehouse in Aspropyrgos, northwestern Attica, and fled with a large amount of copper.

Bets off

An armed robber threatened the owner of a betting shop in Thessaloniki yesterday morning as she was opening her store and forced her to hand over the weekend's takings before fleeing. It was unclear how much cash had been in the register. There were no injuries reported.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM – GREEK LANGUAGE - BATTLE OF CRETE

Australian Hellenic Council meets with Federal Member for Higgins

Following our meeting in Canberra on Monday June 21 with the Hon Kelly O'Dwyer Federal Member for Higgins, the Australian Hellenic Council welcomes the speech she made in Federal Parliament on the following day.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (4.27 pm)—I rise to speak on the current threat to the diversity of foreign languages in our government schools. The Rudd government is currently considering reducing the number of foreign languages taught in public schools from 12 to eight under its proposed new national curriculum. The teaching of languages at school serves to further enrich students both linguistically and culturally. Learning a foreign language gives students an opportunity to learn about other countries and cultures on a deeper level.

One of the languages that the government is considering abandoning is Modern Greek, a language of great significance to the Western and English-speaking world. Let me state for the record that this is something that I oppose. The teaching of Modern Greek in our schools currently gives students the opportunity to learn about one of the most important cultures in the world. By learning about the history and language of Greece, students are learning about the development of Western civilisation and the growth of important institutions that remain with us today. Today's modern, enlightened democracies are the beneficiaries of Athenian political and philosophical thought, and our literary heritage has drawn upon the mythologies and great literary and historical works of Greek writers and philosophers. The English language has benefited from Greek influence, with approximately 12 per cent of English words having Greek origin. An understanding of the English language's Greek roots can enhance our knowledge not only of Greek but



Federal Member for Higgins, Kelly O'Dwyer

of English as well. A history and language curriculum that is well founded in classical antiquity and foreign language is the best education revolution that our children can have. By learning the Greek language, students are accustomed to other cultures, innovations and traditions.

Our national curriculum should also reflect important events in our nation's history. Our friendship and cooperation with Greece and the Greek people were most fully displayed during World War II, when both Australia and Greece were brought into the war against the imperial ambitions of the Nazi regime in Germany. Next year will mark the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Crete, a landmark event during World War II that saw the end of the German military ascendancy. Australia and Greece have a strong history of friendship and cooperation, and the Greek diaspora is very much a part of my own electorate of Higgins. It gives me great pleasure and it is a great privilege to represent their concerns today.

Delphi's tribute to Marathon

The impact of the Marathon battle on ancient and modern times is this year's theme of the European Cultural Centre of Delphi's international annual forum, which summons academics, political scientists and university professors of classics, history and archaeology.

Presided by Helene Ahrweiler, the conference will run from July 2 to 4 in Delphi and will feature international speakers including Reinhold Bichler, professor of ancient history at the University of Innsbruck; Walter Ameling, professor of ancient history at the University of Cologne; and Karim Arafat, director of the Centre for Hellenic Studies at King's College.

As part of the forum's parallel artistic programme, a group exhibition will feature mainly sculptured pieces by Nikos Navridis, Venia Dimitrakopoulou and Danae Stratou. Instead of a tribute display of museum items that would serve as a mere reminder of the Marathon, curator Efi Andreadi has chosen to present the work of eight contemporary Greek artists “that grant [the Marathon] a different substantial perspective and a living echo”.

Delphi will also host the premiere of the National Theatre of Northern Greece's staging of Aristophanes' political comedy The Acharnians -

“a dramatically modern [play]”, according to director Sotiris Hatzakis, “especially in the circumstances of moral and cultural downfall accompanying the financial crisis”. It stars composer Stamatis Kraounakis and actors Grigoris Valtinos and Costas Voutsas.

The historical background of the Marathon conflict, its causes and effects, are the focus of a new documentary by Maria Hatzimichali-Papaliou featuring text by Ioannina Professor of Classical Philology Fanis Kakridis, who based his research on ancient sources.

As part of Memi Spyratou's production Marathon 2,500 Years After - A Call to Friends and Enemies, a chorus of priestesses choreographed by Dorina Kalethrianou and a messenger will read poems and excerpts by Andreas Kalvos, Angelos Sikelianos, CP Cavafy and Costis Palamas among others.

A Persian poetry reading by poet Fereydu Faryad, a talk on the mystical poetry of the Sufi and a music programme selected by composer Thanos Mikroutsikos have also been planned. Percussionists Dimitris Dessylas and Petros Kourtis will give a series of musical workshops, master classes, lectures and concerts through to July 12.