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Hellenism, Universal Rights and Apartheid

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Hellenism, Greek Language and Greek Culture

"Hellenism" is a term with various shades of meaning. The term is reported to have originated in the 7th century B.C. when a number of tribes in what-is-now Greece formed a league and began to call themselves *Ellenes*. One of the common factors that united them was their language.

Professor Constantine Trypanis was a classics scholar who lived and taught classical literature in Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States. In 1981, he published in Greek and translated into English the work *Greek Poetry, from Homer to Seferis* in which he asserts that despite changes over a period of more than three thousand years, there is no other language with such a long tradition.

Today, we refer to "Ancient Greek" as a language that was spoken and written before the beginning of the Christian era. But the Greek language has a rich history and has evolved significantly over its 34 century history. Koiné Greek was the language in which the New Testament and the Christian Bible was written. Katharevousa Greek was popular with the Church and the elite class. Demotic Greek or Demotiki is the modern form of the Greek language, which was used by poets, writers and the common people for many years since as early as 1818, but was officially recognised only in 1976. George Seferis and Odysseus Elytis, both Greek nationals who wrote in demotic Greek, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in the 20th century.

Soldiers, teachers, merchants, architects, philosophers and others left what-is-now mainland Greece and established themselves globally in many lands, including the Hellespont, Egypt, Asia Minor, Italy, Armenia, and Russia. They introduced Greek language, art, culture and religious practices in these places and it spread.

During the late 6th and early 5th century B.C. the word Hellenism acquired a new meaning, "Doing Things the Greek way". This new meaning could be found not only in the city-states in mainland Greece but also on the Islands and especially in the citystates where Athens did

business. The form of government in most of these states, if not dictatorial or democratic, was Oligarchical.

In about 594 B.C., Solon became the Archon of Athens. Solon was determined to reform Athens' constitution and laws, to put an end to the tyrannical practices of the rich against the poorer classes. He introduced laws that would enable poor farmers who had been enslaved to get their land back and to prohibit enslavement if a debt was not paid.

Solon's most important contribution was constitutional reform. Widely considered the father of democracy, Solon extended the franchise to the poor. They received the right to be members of the Ecclesia. They also received the right to participate in the justice system by sitting on a jury; and having a say in the manner in which magistrates were appointed. In order to prevent plutocrats from making changes, Solon included provisions in his constitution that would make it difficult to amend. He then left Athens in order to avoid impeachment by the rich.

When Cleisthenes became Archon, he relied on this foundation. He amended the constitution to prevent the three tribes of Athens from depriving the newly enfranchised Athenians. He divided Athens into an additional ten areas and established *demes*. He also enfranchised emancipated slaves and admitted many skilled workers as citizens. This broke the power previously exercised by the three tribes and their noble families and friends. In order to prevent tyrants from taking over, he introduced provisions in the constitution to ostracise strong minded persons.

The reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes in the 6th and 5th centuries are similar to some of the fundamental human rights prescribed in democratic countries in the 21st century, including some which are now described as socio-economic rights, which are condemned by ultra conservatives of our age.

The middle of the 5th century B.C. has been described as the "Golden Age" of Greece, particularly when Pericles was the Archon of Athens. Athens was the mistress of the seas; her fleet was unbeatable. Merchants, teachers, artists, architects and others were welcomed by the Hellenised city states beyond Greece's borders. The Spartans were jealous of her extended sphere of influence. In 431 B.C., the Spartans began the Peloponnesian War by invading Attica, which Athens could not defend. However, the Spartans could not invade the city of Athens within which the Parthenon was built on the Acropolis. Pericles spoke about his glorious city and the virtues of its citizens. As recorded by Thucydides, Pericles spoke of

"the Athenian constitution and the Athenian way of life that brought us to greatness".

Pericles' funeral oration for those who fell defending Attica from the Spartans is relevant to anyone concerned with human rights today:

"For our system of government does not copy the systems of our neighbours; we are a model to them, not they to us. Our constitution is called a democracy, because power rests in the hands not of the few but of the many. Our laws guarantee equal justice for all in their private disputes; and as for the election of public officials, we welcome talent to every arena of achievement, nor do we make our choices on the grounds of class but on the grounds of excellence alone. And as we give free play to all in our public life, so we carry the same spirit into our daily relations with one another. We acknowledge the restraint of reverence; we are obedient to those in authority and to the laws, especially to those that give protection to the oppressed and those unwritten laws of the heart whose transgression brings admitted shame."

"We are lovers of beauty without extravagance, and lovers of wisdom without effeminacy. We differ from other states in regarding the man who keeps aloof from public life not as "private" but as useless; we decide or debate, carefully and in person, all matters of

policy, and we hold, not that words and deeds go ill together, but that acts are foredoomed to failure when undertaken undiscussed."

In a word, I say our city as a whole is an education to Greece, and that our citizens yield to none, man by man, for independence of spirit, many-sidedness of attainment, and complete self-reliance in limbs and brain.

Men of the future will wonder at us, as all men do today. We need no Homer or other man of words to praise us".

"For you now, it remains to rival what they have done and, knowing that the secret of happiness is freedom and the secret of freedom a brave heart, not idly to stand aside from the enemy's onslaught".

I would like to say that those words have been very meaningful for me, that they have played a role in shaping my own life.

Later, the war did not go well for the Athenians. Many had died on the battlefield and even more were victims of the plague. Their former allies were abandoning them. The islands of Mytilene and Lesbos fortified their harbours. Athens was accused of a number of transgressions: abusing the funds of the Delian League; dealing with their members not as allies but as dependants; departing from the traditions of candid and independent thinking about fundamental issues involved in the life of the individual and of the community; and ignoring the Greek principle that the unexamined life is no life for man.

The Athenians perceived this as a revolt and a defiance of their leadership. The Islanders sent men to Athens to negotiate. The Athenians rejected their offers and the leader of the delegation was executed. The Athenian assembly was convened and almost unanimously resolved to sentence all the male citizens of Mytilene to death. The women and children would be sold into slavery. A trireme was dispatched to Mytilene to implement the decision. The leader who had proposed the punishment was Cleon.

Diodotus called for a new gathering of the assembly for the following day in order to revoke the harsh and inhumane punishment imposed on the Mytilenians. In what has become known as Mytilenian debate between Cleon and Diodotus, Cleon began by questioning the very value of democracy:

"Personally I have had occasion often enough already to observe that a democracy is incapable of governing others, and I am all the more convinced of this when I see how you are now changing your minds about the Mytilenians."

Cleon proceeded to question the very worth of free speech and described the Athenians as *"victims of their own pleasure in listening, and are more like an audience sitting at the feet of a professional lecturer than a parliament discussing matters of state."*

Diodotus responded as follows:

"Haste and anger are...the two greatest obstacles to wise counsel..."

Diodotus considered whether the question was not whether the Mytilenians were guilty so much as whether the Athenians were making the right decision for themselves. Diodotus went on to question whether the death penalty was really a means of deterrence from revolt or just the opposite and said *"we should recognise that the proper basis of our security is good administration rather than in fear of legal penalties"*. He finished by asking the Athenians fundamentally to question what is right and just and asked them to look to moderation rather than aggressive punishment. Diodotus urged the Athenians to spare the Mytilenians in an effort to create an alliance.

The assembly revoked the earlier decision. Another trireme was sent to stop the first and the lives of the total male population and the freedom of the women and children were saved. But more than a thousand Islanders were killed in the process.

Thucydides, who recorded these events, made the following observation:

"Indeed it is true that in these acts of revenge on others men take it upon themselves to begin the process of repealing these general laws of humanity which are here to give hope of salvation to all who are in distress, instead of leaving those laws in existence, remembering that there may come a time when they, too, will be in danger and will need their protection."

The "general laws of humanity" referred to by Thucydides were the written laws from the time Drakos, Solon and Cleisthenes were Archons. These laws were enacted with checks and balances and approved by committees of the assembly, the Decastes (Judges) and the Archons. There were also provisions as to how the laws had to be applied, particularly against those guilty of homicide.

Thucydides was often quoted by academics and human rights lawyers to as a threat to the apartheid regime. During apartheid times, criticizing the government by quoting ancient authority was likely escape the attention of the security police.

From the sixth century BC theatre played an important part in Athenian life. Euripides wrote *Trojan Women* in which Hecuba utters words to this effect (and I paraphrase):

"Oh, foolish men who for the love of gold left your country, your wives and children and came to destroy ours, to kill my husband, my sons and my grandson Astianax in order to put an end to Prime's kingdom and to make my daughters the concubines of your leaders."

Euripides offended the Athenians by breaching the rule prohibiting use of the theatre to present controversial subjects. Not only was he refused the prize for having presented the best play but he was fined. Freedom of expression had its limitations even during the Golden Age.

In his comedy *The Clouds*, Aristophanes mocks Socrates and the unlettered peasant who is about to kick his two sleeping slaves on the floor of the passage of his house. The peasant draws back his foot and then stops, cursing the war that now prohibits him from kicking them. Aristophanes' audience knew that during the first invasion of Attica by the Spartans, thousands of Athenian slaves had joined the Spartans.

Athenians were more tolerant of utterances by comedians than those who wrote tragedies. Troubles such as the war, the plague and the death of Pericles undermined the commitment of the Athenians to democracy. In the same way, in our times the values of democracies are threatened in the name of security.

What happened to Hellenism after its flowering in Athens?

Kings, oligarchs and even tyrants mimicked Athenian democracy and wanted to be seen to apply the principles of Hellenism. Athenians, led by Demosthenes, would not recognise the Macedonians as Hellenes, but said they were barbarians, despite the fact that King Philip employed Aristotle to teach his son Alexander. On the other hand, Isocrates defined Hellenes as those who have *"partaken of our learning."*

King Philip was anxious to establish his authority over most, if not all, Greeks. He knew that even if he won battles he could not be accepted as leader of the Hellenes. That is likely the reason why he invited Aristotle to educate his heir, Alexander. King Philip's ambition would not be fulfilled. His

son's conquests throughout the Greek World and beyond were achieved through persuasion of those who peacefully succumbed to his will and brutal conduct towards those who did not surrender. His vision of a Hellenic world, partly accommodating eastern, not-so-democratic culture spread a form of Hellenism throughout the provinces ruled by the Persian Empire and from Egypt to India. He founded cities and changed the names of others to Alexandria. His successors followed his example.

The Peloponnesian war, which the Spartans won, weakened Athens and her alliance. Sparta and her allies could not unify the cities of Greece to oppose Roman expansionism. The Romans may have occupied the Hellenistic World militarily but they were enchanted by the Hellenistic language, art and culture. It was the Romans who changed our name from Hellenes to Greeks.

This Roman esteem for Hellenism expressed itself in various ways. Nero contrived to win many prizes at the Olympic Games; and Hadrian was described as an ardent admirer of Greece who sought to make Athens the cultural capital of the Roman Empire.

Famously, Shakespeare has Cicero addressing the crowd gathered after Julius Caesar's death in Greek, although that might tell us more about Elizabethan England than Rome.

Hadrian amended the legal code which forbade torture. He did not go so far as to abolish slavery but made mitigating provisions to obviate its harshness. Schiller described Hadrian as *"the empire's first servant"*. Edward Gibbon called him *"an active genius"*, noting *"his equity and moderation"* and further commenting that *"his era" was "the happiest era of human history"*.

Hellenism's polytheism brought it into conflict with the monotheism of the Hebrews and the early Christians despite the fact that Greek was the language used by early Christians and moreover that their texts were in Aramaic and Greek. Christianity became more widespread after the Emperor Constantine and his mother adopted Christianity as their religion. During that time, the Christian church accepted some of the philosophical principles of Hellenism.

After the fall of Byzantium, many of the classical Greek writings on philosophy, astronomy, medicine and science in general were translated into Arabic. When Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453, there was an exodus to the west. The Renaissance era began. Many of the works were translated by Italian, German, French, English, Irish and later American scholars. The Lutherans, Calvinists, the Slavs and the Russians translated the Greek religious and liturgical texts into their languages.

The political, social and economic changes of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and the rise of the Age of Reason ushered in what may be described as the golden years of Hellenism. Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns were considered essential for the façade of public buildings, universities, museums and art galleries. Philosophers, writers, scientists, astronomers, mathematicians, physicists, doctors, chemists, pharmacists, engineers, inventors and others introduced Greek words into English, French, German and other languages. Greek names were used by newly established towns and states in America. Greek, Latin and the Classics are still taught by leading Universities.

Philhellenes rejoiced when in March 1821 a war of independence was declared by the people in Greece. The *Philiki Etaireia* (the "Friendly Society"), a secret organization, had canvassed support for the expulsion of the Ottoman Empire from Greece. Many responded. Lord Byron was the most prominent of those who went to Greece and wrote poems in praise of the revolt. He even cursed his countryman, Lord Elgin, for having removed works of art from the Parthenon. Lord Byron is considered one of the heroes of Greek independence. Upon his death, Dionysios Solomos, who wrote *The Hymn to Liberty*, wrote a paeon entreating liberty to stop lashing out with its sword and to join the Greeks in mourning the death of Lord Byron. His statue is among the heroes of the revolution in the middle of Athens.

Democracy had to compete with royalty in the newly independent Hellenic republic because after the Napoleonic wars Metternich of the Austrian empire could not envisage a state without a king. Military putsches would take over during the 20th century until democracy was firmly established in 1974 by the previously exiled Prime Minister Constantinos Karamanlis. It is not a direct democracy such as envisaged by Solon and Cleisthenes, but even with all its recent problems, it appears to be working. Let us now look at the recent past, particularly in South Africa.

It is clear that human rights have a history that spans millennia. I will take a moment to speak briefly about human rights over the last hundred years, particularly as they exist (or are absent) in South Africa.

Shortly after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela visited the small committee drafting a proposed Bill of Rights and Constitution. His advice to us was that we had to make sure that the Constitution was good for all the people of South Africa, not only a particular political party. His view prevailed both at the negotiating table in Codesa (the negotiation forum at the end of 1993) and the Constituent Assembly after the first democratic election. The South African Constitution was enacted by more than 80% of the democratically elected parliamentary representatives in 1995 and certified by the Constitutional Court as compliant with the 34 democratic principles agreed to by the delegates of more than 20 political parties and other organisations at Codesa. The Constitution is not cast in stone. A number of amendments have been adopted by the necessary two-thirds majority. None of the founding principles have been altered. We must all make sure that they are not.

There are legitimate grievances about the lack of delivery in relation to the protection of rights in the South African Constitution, particularly with respect to the elimination of poverty, the lack of educational and health services, the absence of adequate housing and opportunities to find decent employment. Those who argue that it is partly the fault of the Constitution that these promised rights have not been achieved are misguided. We must concede that much more should have been done and much more has to be done. We may be blamed for not having foreseen that we could not within a period of seventeen years wipe out the injustices perpetrated for over three centuries to the vast majority of the people of South Africa.

In this way, our generation's hopes have not been fulfilled. This failure is not limited to South Africa, but elsewhere in the world. Millions have lost their lives in wars. The Cold War, the Atomic Weapons race, the wars in Algeria, Korea, Vietnam, in the Middle East and elsewhere have caused the death of hundreds of thousands. The promised fundamental human rights have been abrogated in the name of state security and other so-called pressing needs. The security of the state is the favourite excuse of tyrants as well as constitutional democracies for the deprivation of rights. International Conventions are regularly violated. Detention without trial, torture and murder by hit squads are not unheard of. The jurisdiction of the courts is ousted and the independence of the judiciary is not always respected.

The struggle for recognition and enforcement of human rights is not new as the example of the Ancient Greeks tells us. Tyrants, Kings and Queens, Emperors, Generals, Commissars, Presidents and Prime Ministers through the ages have claimed the right to rule for life and to appoint a successor. The people of the world have often said no to them. I believe that our generation will reject the fatuous reasons often advanced for abrogating the rights of freedom, equality and dignity of all the people in our world. We should not accept that the main principles of democracy are mere words. We should insist that Human Rights should be respected, promoted and obeyed.

We must continually strive for a world in which all people enjoy human rights. Do not allow us to be misled into believing that they are not valid throughout the world. Human rights are universal. I am confident that future generations will do better than ours.

In 1948, the apartheid regime came into power. *Apartheid* literally means “apartness”: We learned soon enough what it really meant. Legislation was quickly introduced with a view to eliminating franchise rights for any non-Whites, including Blacks, Asians and even Coloureds who had previously possessed certain rights. This policy manifested itself in many ways, including: separate education, health services, residential areas, transport, and entrances to public buildings. These non-White groups were even excluded from certain facilities and areas, such as public parks. Any disobedience of these laws and policies was made a criminal offence. The communist party was banned. A number of immigrants, particularly Blacks, Asians and even southern Europeans, had only limited entry to South Africa. Banning orders were issued preventing certain targeted individuals from attending gatherings, publishing statements, and moving beyond the boundaries of the area they lived in. Worst still, they faced detention *incommunicado* without trial initially for 90 days, later for 180 days, and eventually for an indefinite period.

In the mid-1950s, a panel of five judges sitting on the Court of Appeal declared the disenfranchisement of coloured people invalid. The government acted quickly in two ways. First, they appointed six additional judges to create an eleven judge panel. All were White. Second, in order to obtain the requisite 2/3 majority in Parliament so that their policy would be valid, they made numerous appointments to the Senate to obtain that majority. The case went to the eleven judge panel who reversed the previous decision and upheld the disenfranchisement in a 10-1 majority. The lone dissenting judge said that this was a fraudulent way of doing things.

The worst was still to come. We soon became witnesses to deaths in detention, hit squads murdering opponents of the apartheid regime, the imposition of death sentences for politically-inspired crimes, the declaration of states of emergency and the granting of immunity to wrong-doers. After the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, which resulted in the slaughter by the police of over 60 men and the wounding of a few hundred, the two major liberation movements, the African National Congress and the Pan-African Congress, were declared unlawful organizations.

Despite these oppressive measures, there was still some limited space for the legal profession, the English language press, academics and judges to speak out against injustice. In an effort to retain the vestiges of freedom of speech, some judges would rely on equitable relief in the common law to get around the harsh provisions of the regime's autocratic practices.

A group of us formed Lawyers for Human Rights during the late 1970s. Prime Minister John Vorster made a public statement to the effect that human rights were getting out of hand in South Africa.

The leader of the struggle was Nelson Mandela. Let us look at what he had to go through from the time he was a student at Wits University in the late 1940s and early 1950s. At that time, the University of the Witwatersrand, together with a couple of other universities in South Africa, were called “open” universities meaning that suitably qualified Blacks could study there. Nelson Mandela's ambition was to become a member of the Bar and to be the first Black advocate (or barrister) in South Africa. But he was prevented from doing so by the Dean of the Faculty of Law. He failed one of his subjects and, although he was entitled to a supplementary examination, the Dean refused his request. The Dean told Mandela that a Black man would never succeed as an advocate or member of the Bar. In order to succeed, said the Dean, you had to be a member of the privileged White society. He persuaded Mandela to abandon his hope and to become an attorney (or solicitor) instead.

As a student, Mandela was the leader of the African National Congress Youth League. When he became a solicitor, together with Oliver Tambo in the early 1950s, he became the volunteer-in-chief of the Defiance Campaign, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi to peacefully protest against discriminatory laws. At the end of the campaign, he and seven others were charged with contravening the Separate Amenities Act as well as the Suppression of Communism Act and with inciting others to do the same. He was convicted and given a suspended sentence. The Law

Society brought a Court application to strike him off the roll of attorneys because he had committed a criminal offence. Two leading members of the Bar, led by Walter Pollack, represented him and successfully submitted to the two judges hearing the application that the offence he had committed was a political offence in which there was no turpitude involved.

Mandela and Oliver Tambo could not lawfully occupy office space in the city or near the Courts because this space was reserved for Whites only. They were threatened with prosecution under the Group Areas Act and, if convicted, they would either go to prison or be required to pay a heavy fine. Senior members of the Bar intervened on their behalf and the authorities turned a blind eye.

Mandela and Oliver Tambo's legal practice was restricted to weekends when the court was not in session. They developed a busy practice in the Transvaal. They had to brief young counsel to deal with their clients' cases.

Mandela became the provincial leader of the African National Congress and played an active role in the adoption of the Freedom Charter. He and 155 others were charged with treason at the end of 1956. At the trial, Mandela gave evidence to the effect of the Freedom Charter was not a document heralding the establishment of a communist state nor was it designed to overthrow the White regime by violence. The accused were represented by a team of top lawyers and gave cogent evidence that all they wanted was a democratic South Africa. They won the case and were discharged in June 1961 after a trial that lasted nearly five years.

In 1961, Mandela took the initiative to form a military wing in order to attack symbols of apartheid, taking great care that there should not be loss of life. He attempted to form a new organization with similar aims and objects as the African National Congress. The government's heavy handed treatment of those involved led to the abandonment of that scheme.

In 1962, Mandela left South Africa lawfully for approximately six months to seek help from the independent African states, the Non-Aligned Movement and also from the Labour Party in the United Kingdom. Upon his return to South Africa, he was charged for unlawfully leaving the country. During the trial, he made his famous speech – "A Black man in a White man's Court." He was found guilty and was sentenced to five years imprisonment.

While Mandela was in prison, police arrested a number of ANC leaders on July 11, 1963 in Rivonia, north of Johannesburg. Mandela was also brought in and they were charged with sabotage (which was easier to prove than treason) and for plotting a foreign invasion of South Africa. Their case became known worldwide as the "Rivonia Trial". The prosecution compared the accused to members of the Red Brigade of Italy, the *Baader Meinhof* of Germany and the PLO in Palestine. The smear did not stick. The world preferred the vision of the accused that they wanted freedom to live in a country where the human rights of all people were protected.

Mandela made the following closing remarks:

"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

In the end, all but one were convicted. It was feared that there would be death sentences because of Nelson Mandela's lengthy statement from the dock and the apparent sincerity of his co-accused. Numerous protests, particularly by young people, all around the world took place. The death sentence was not imposed. They were all given life sentences and taken to Robben Island. The case has been called the "trial of the century."

Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island where he spent the next 18 of his 27 years in prison. I was the only advocate (or barrister) that had access to Nelson Mandela throughout his lengthy imprisonment. You had to spend the whole day on the Island because the ferry took you there in the morning and only left in the late afternoon. We had a lot of time to talk. It was inevitable that we should speak about democracy, various forms of government and speculate about the future about which we were both optimistic.

He also related to me what he and his fellow prisoners did when they were not breaking stones at the quarry. They put on plays, including *Antigone*. He said to me, *"Fortunately, the prison authorities did not know what it was about."* He and I did know. *Antigone* was written by Sophocles in the 5th century B.C. and tells the story of the disobedience of the title character, Antigone. Creon, the ruler at the time, had decreed that Antigone's brother, Polyneices who died a rebel in the civil war, would not be sanctified by holy rites and buried, but instead be left on the battlefield where his body would be preyed on by dogs and vultures. Antigone defied Creon by burying her brother. The prison authorities also did not know that the play had been adapted into modern form by the French playwright Anouilh during the Second World War during the German occupation of France with the express purpose of encouraging the French population to disobey the Nazi occupiers. Mandela told me, on his release and before he became President of South Africa, that the ancient Greek play had taught him a very important lesson: a leader should never abuse his powers.

When I visited Ancient Olympia, whilst Mandela was still in prison, the mayor told me that its Municipal Council had declared him an honorary citizen. The mayor told me that they had written to Mandela in prison to inform him of this and were disappointed that there had been no reply. On my next visit to Robben Island, I asked Mandela whether he had seen the letter. He had not, but was very excited and said, *"I have been told of many honours bestowed upon me, but none is more significant to me than this honour. Please write to them on my behalf and tell them how grateful I am."*

Mandela and I made a pact that if the Olympics took place in Athens to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympics, which began in 1886 in Athens, the two of us would go together. Our pact was based on our joint optimism that he would be free from his life imprisonment and that the 1988 Olympic Games would be given to Greece. Unfortunately, neither happened. But Nelson Mandela, his wife Graça Machel, my wife Arethe and I went for a short period to Greece after he was freed and his term as president had come to an end. The main purpose was for Nelson Mandela to sign the Olympic Truce in preparation for the Athens Olympics in 2004. In the hotel, he phoned me to come to the presidential suite. The curtains had been drawn. I opened them and said, "Nelson, come look." Before us was a breath-taking view of the Parthenon. He looked and looked and looked and said, "George, why do I feel like I've been here before?" He couldn't explain it and neither could I. But I like to think that Mandela was simply impressed by all things Greek.

When he became President, I was present with him when a Greek television crew interviewed him. I remember it well. The reporter asked Mandela what he thought of Greece. His response was this:

"I know a lot about Greece. I consider her the mother of democracy. I only hope that one day South Africa will become her first worthy daughter."

George Bizos

END