

Reform – Modernization – Change *From the Tudor Epoch Onwards.....*

by Spyros Ranis

Under Development

We very often hear or read strong words on progress, productivity, competition, globalization, et cetera, which in fact is the artistic product of employed communication experts. The employers (any employer) make use of this “product” to promote and sell to the general public a “progressive” profile, whatever might this mean. If anything. Save any virtual reality in our modern social life, what we’ve actually created is a corporate state, where the “commoner on the street” is thoroughly disregarded, unless he belongs to a guild. Any guild, that may muster fifty demonstrators, or so, to block the main street, or pose the threat of “political consequences” which both paralyze good intentions. If any.

This is the standard case in any country being under some development process, or it so believes and where elections are occasionally carried out. For any such country, to look back at History, out of mere curiosity, could be a very good idea.

2500 years ago, when it was critical for the city-state of Athens to acquire a strong fleet, Themistocles launched what we today call a state shipping policy. He decided that “Athenians should become seamen”¹. He accordingly subsidised 100 trusted citizens, with 100 talents each, with the mandate, to build and equip one trireme each.

Indeed, «the 100 men, quickly built one trireme each, which was fast and beautiful»². So, the Persians were defeated in the Salamis Straits.

It was a matter of choice, to trust

or not to trust, the “commoner on the street”. But the reader shouldn’t go that back, as it suffices only to go to the “modern” Tudor sovereigns, in England.

An Interminable Revolution

In the last half of eighteenth century, particularly in Britain, but not only, a succession of substantial changes began that, over many years, transformed social and economic life, and gave to modern economy the form we today enjoy. But not everybody...

A world of agricultural, and of idyllic Arcadian existence, took a course to radical, though very slow, alterations.

Extraordinary mechanical inventions and innovations signaled the advent in the world of Technology, mass production and mass-even conspicuous – consumption.

It was the Industrial Revolution, when this country was under the Turkish yoke whose ardent reflections, still plague our social, political and economic life.

And life for the ordinary citizen is, in a general sense, today, far better than that of a king only a hundred years ago, and democracy is considered the best regime³. But not everywhere and for everybody.

Our leaders steadily promise *change, modernization, reform* which are tasks of herculian dimensions for statesmen only to shoulder unfettered by political deliberation and firm to guilds’ certain wrath.

A logical blue-print of the ideal democratic regime, suitable for every nation was never produced



and no tablets were ever handed down, from mount Sinai to a politician to that matter, though many so allege in any preelection period. The central idea in democracy may be synopsised in a single principle. The indispensable sense of community where any special interest gives way to the general interest: **what best serves all best serves the individual**. This simple principle is altogether ignored in a corporate state. People at the end get the social system they deserve and societies produce and support political doctrines and politicians in line with their own requirements and mores.

In search of the optimum effect

Tudor society was in England clearly inclined to change, feeling its way out of later medieval chaotic conditions and guilds’ domination. The Tudor sovereigns and governments responded correctly – though eventually harshly to the advent of the new epoch. It was a matter of “modernization”.

A major point to make in this historic evolution is probably that of interaction, as it was very clear that

each of the major elements of industrialism served as a stimulant to every other element, and when every suchlike element was diligently provided for, the cumulative effect was spectacular.

The concept of interaction was bred in cadence with the Industrial Revolution. Each of industrialism's major elements comprises in turn several vocations and activities.

Transport for instance, needs an assortment of interactive engineering trades, to support its potential and secure cheap and reliable freightage.

A harbour town, was then-and now is – serviced by a number of small or, not so small-but certainly significant concerns, dealing with shipbuilding, ships' victuals, storehouses, chandlery, agencies, banking, sea-faring manufactures, road access, etc. Even seamen's bars... All strings pull to one direction. This "interaction" concept is the forerunner of the modern Maritime Cluster concept which intends to harmonize the various satellite trades, callings and activities that constitute the shipping industry so that, the optimum cumulative effect is achieved to the benefit of every one involved. And that of the country. This is the rule of thumb for a state maritime policy, and this is the case in Britain, Holland, Norway etc. but, in our country it remains to be invented

The oyster of the English Trade

By the eighteenth century, a strong community of prospering merchants and industrialists in England, had secured a prominent trading status. A fine banking system, good, deep ports, a first class merchant fleet, a host of markets around the world, and a stable administration were evolving fast. The country was provided with good sources both for supplies or for sales and private enterprises wanted nothing better than

freedom of shackles, so that they could pursue their interest round the world which world was considered to be "the oyster of English trade", and the pearls of prosperity, might and pride would flood the nation. And they surely did. The state realized the vast importance and potential of its "oystercatching" entrepreneurs, and moving away from a paternalistic governance of the past adapted itself to the historic circumstance. The Industrial Revolution was there – but not everywhere – to stay.

The dynamic urge for trade and industry from the Tudor period onwards, led to the creation of a great empire. Two hundred years into the Industrial Revolution simple, long established - in the industrialized world – policies and practices, are nowadays neglected in countries which are on the way to industrialization or modernization. Or so they believe...

Pride and Prejudice

We are certainly proud for our strong merchant marine but there is a painful and hurtful prejudice in the public sector and the press. The marine industry is in fact vital to the prosperity, even the survival of the world, though very few outsiders have any idea about. Most foster false perceptions, vastly different from reality.

How the people and our incumbent leaders perceive the – greatest possibly worldwide – industry? Of all the world's goods and chattels moving in international commerce, 95% is carried by the marine industry.

This simple fact isn't sensational and cannot attract readers and TV viewers. A marine casualty is news, it makes sense, and it's often garnished with fiction and the standard oilsoaked cormorant's archive photo.

Stories follow about lax safety, tax-haven registries, brass plate companies, aging rust buckets, etc.,

all in the same vein. To nourish quick frivolous impressions and stir public's emotional fear. Our leaders rush to allay public concern, with new rules and regulations.

Actually more than 99,5% of seaborne goods reach safely their destination.

Our shipping is the achievement and performance of the inventive wits of the owners coupled with the traditional craft of the greek seafarers.

The world is today the pearloyster of our fleet, but this hardly has ever been realized by the public, the media or our political establishment.

Strong and prestigious our prime industry as it is in global terms, within our territorial waters remains in thrall to bureaucracy and political deliberation. It is impossible for our leaders to stomach the international character of shipping, and vessel's penchant to run, under pressure, for cover, to alien registries. "Think globally, act globally, is the strong recommendation by the E.U to member states. Versus, think nationally, act nationally, which is the practice in our maritime country.

The Maritime Cluster Concept

Some estimate a doubling of global seaborne trade between now and the year 2017, which means that our interests in this activity are set to increase. And certainly the nostalgic notion that we are a seafarer's nation strait descendants of Odysseus, is altogether insufficient to guarantee our present and future part at sea. A consistent state shipping policy is nevertheless long overdue and it does not seem to be in the cards. Each new minister summarily dismisses his predecessor's plans and he forms several committees for new plans and policies. When he leaves the post, he makes room for further committees.

Competitor maritime countries,

MARITIME POLICY

recognizing the fragmented nature of the maritime endeavour, have done practical things to draw together its various strands, achieving the optimum cumulative effect. This is the **Maritime Cluster Concept**. Needless to say that our relatively small country seems to have no idea over how to cope with our great shipping industry, which thus takes refuge to foreign services/ flags/officers.

Seapower, after all, is not just a matter of vessels but a fundamental characteristic of any market oriented, industrially driven nation, motivated by a desire for national wealth and might.

Norway, to mention one of these countries, has developed what it describes as the Maritime Cluster' approach in which, guided by a high-level **Maritime Forum**¹, brings together commercial, maritime education, research and every other sea-related element. It is to the national interest for commercial

interests, marine schools, researchers and policy-makers to march in step, and to sing in tune. The Norwegians have been markedly successful in growing their maritime industry through this approach.

Spectacular is the progress made by the Dutch, where the 'cluster' concept has been considerably refined into what is called the Dutch Maritime Network. This encompasses every maritime sector and no fewer than eleven thousand maritime companies which range from one-or two- man ship design firms or freight forwarders, sole trading arbitrators and so onto very large international companies involved in dredging and sea defence, shipbuilding and repairing, research and training centers, ports and intermodal cargo handling.

Our shipping steadily scores gold, we certainly savor being the world champion, and we deserve a **state shipping policy**, which could be a

statesman's feat.

The last to mention but not the least: of the Greek population 15% is occupied in agriculture – stocks breeding or forestry with 6,6% contribution to our Gross Domestic Product.

About 1% is involved in shipping with an about equal, - 6% - contribution to our G.D.P.

Generally speaking we need a statesman to thrust this people face to face with its history and legends, its past and present and with our true image.

Good god knows we deserve it.

¹ "Θαλασσίους γενέσθαι τους Αθηναίους "

² "Οι εκατόν άνδρες , έκαστος . ίαν τριήρη κατέστησαν , σπουδή χορησά . ενοι διά κάλλους και τάχους "

³ "Democracy is the worst regime save all the others". W. Churchill.

⁴ An independent committee of a dozen experts.