

SOCIETY

* Chinese, Arabs and South-Korean don't show interest, in spite of claims to the contrary.

Mr Kefalogiannis sunk in Timbaki

The plan for the creation of a transshipment port in the south of the Heraklion Prefecture fills up with... water

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The inhabitants of the Messara are asking for the intervention of the European Community and of Prime Minister Mr K. Karamanlis, in order to clarify the conditions under which the creation of a container distribution center in Timbaki (Crete) is being promoted by the Minister of Mercantile Marine Mr Emm. Kefalogiannis. Mr St. Arnaoutakis (Pasok, Greek socialist party), member of the European Parliament, informed the European Commission, in a written question to the Commission, of the intentions of Mr Kefalogiannis. He underlines that there does not exist any study of the utility (question: in the sense of usefulness or practicality?) of the construction of a harbour for container ships in Timbaki. He adds that *"such a project, that changes the appearance of the region, should target sustainable development and should, first of all, get the consent of the local community"*. At the same time, Mr V. Kegkeroglou, deputy of Heraklion, in a question made to Mr Karamanlis, invites him to remind the competent authorities that they have to officially inform the residents of the region regarding the plans of the government in Timbaki, if such plans actually exist.



The minister of Mercantile Marine Mr Kefalogiannis, with the head of the Chinese delegation, in Heraklion, November 2005, when the Chinese still appeared to show interest in the creation of a transshipment port in Timbaki.

The idea of the creation of a centre for the reception and management of containers belongs to Mr Kefalogiannis, who desperately sought and keeps on seeking ways to present a project in his electoral region, Heraklion.

The plan of Mr Kefalogiannis foresees that the containers will reach the harbour of Heraklion by road, from the harbour of Timbaki, in order to be loaded there on boats of smaller transportation capacity, which will then distribute the containers in other harbours of the Balkans and the Black Sea.

Of course, the men of Mr Kefalogiannis in Heraklion, which today constitute the administration of the Heraklion Port Authority (such as the adviser of the direction of the Port (question: Port Director?), **Mr Vidakis**, but also other personalities, like **Mr Antonakakis**), have undertaken the difficult task of convincing the inhabitants of the area that not only is the interest of the foreign investors are great, but also that if the is port is finally built, the area won't be influenced as deeply as many opponents to the project claim.

According to the rumours that the men of the Minister of Mercantile Marine (is this Mercantile or Merchant?) let circulate, Heraklion has noted the great interest of Chinese, Arabs, Koreans,

etc., regarding the case of Timbaki. The last one to visit the region, and who was shown the place of the potential transit centre, was the ambassador of South Korea in Athens.

*** The visits and the "gift"**

In spite of this interest claimed by the team of Kefalogiannis, the visits by Chinese and Arab representatives made to the region don't seem to result in anything, and look more like a "gift" to Mr Kefalogiannis than real interest.

The eyes of all potentially interested investors are turned towards the ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki, as well as towards the process of deciding concessions for management services of these two container ports. And, within the scope of the public relations required for this aim, they accept to play this little theatre piece according to which Timbaki supposedly constitutes a solution.

If the concessions for the two terminals of Piraeus and Thessaloniki had not been promoted to private interests by the government, then the solution of Timbaki could have constituted a realistic scenario, provided that the gigantic financing required by the project were ensured.

In concrete terms, the first people that visited the region in the company of Mr Kefalogiannis were the people of the government-owned chinese shipping company China Shipping which, after their return in China, sent a letter to the YEN, in which they thanked the minister for the pleasant conducted tour (!).

In the same letter - but not in the translation of the letter that the YEN let circulate in the press - the people of China Shipping expressed their satisfaction regarding the decision of the Greek government to build a terminal for the reception of containers in Timbaki, something that they will keep in mind.

*** The investors do as... they didn't understand (question: not sure of the meaning of this heading!)**

Following this, China Shipping withdrew its interest from various plans of development in Greece, when the Chinese government decided that COSCO, the other government-owned shipping company of the country, would be the one that would develop in Greece.

The next visitors to come to Greece were people from Dubai. They met Mr Kefalogiannis after one initiative of his. Indeed, they declined, after the end of the meeting, to proceed to a common declaration with him, as they preferred to keep a low profile until the real intentions of the Greek government had been stated.

It is the mobility showed by the people of COSCO that obliged the Arabs to make their presence in the maritime affairs of Greece more perceptible. The interest of the Arabs is focused on the port of Thessaloniki. Not even on the harbour of Piraeus, which they consider problematic.

After the Arabs, delegations from South Korea appeared in the YEN. They are not interested in the process of concession, but in selling to Greece evolved management systems for ports.

Within this scope, one could also include their interest for Timbaki, an interest that the Greek

side cultivated, convincing them that a modern merchant centre will be created in that place.

* Reactions in Heraklion

The thermometer, however, has gone up vertically in the region, with movements of citizens and ecologists resisting vigorously the intentions of Mr Kefalogiannis, and rejecting any possibility of allowing the creation of such a centre in their region.

At the same time, the case of Timbaki, apart from Mr Kefalogiannis, was also mentioned by the minister of National Economy Mr G. Alogoskoufis, obviously in the frame of an agreement of political content with his Cretan colleague, so that he contributes, through actions and declarations, to cultivating a climate of expectations at local level.

Mr Kefalogiannis, bearing a heavy name, is expected to prove, at local level, that he bears with fairness and dignity the title he inherited from his unforgettable uncle and leading executive of New Democracy, *Manolis Kefalogiannis*.

Until now, this title helped him to be easily elected in Heraklion, something that does not seem to be likely to happen so easily in the next elections, especially because Mr Kefalogiannis as a minister created high expectations at local level, before it was finally revealed that they could not to be fulfilled.

Greek originality Merchandising centres near urban areas



Maybe Southern Crete will escape from the destruction that involves the creation of a mercantile centre and it will not become... Piraeus

The development of mercantile centres in inhabited regions constitutes a worldwide Greek originality (question: not sure of the exact meaning here), and the rest of the old ports that were tightly connected to the social webs of the cities in which they were located (not exactly sure what point is being made here).

Similar problems are faced today by most Greek ports. In Piraeus, for example, the installations are connected with seven adjacent municipalities, each of which claiming, by various means, some share of its activity. The situation in Thessaloniki is the same, as well as in Volos, in Alexandroupoli, and so on.

Today, nowhere on the planet are modern mercantile centres built in inhabited areas, nor in areas that develop themselves on the basis of other activities. This is due to the huge

negative impact such centres have on the environment, since they combine many forms of transport.

The project to operating a mercantile centre in Timbaki, which will be connected with the markets of the Black Sea and the Balkans via Heraklion, will not only have negative influences on the region of the Messara, but also on the whole Prefecture of Heraklion, damaging, from an environmental point of view, Heraklion itself as well as all the areas crossed by the trucks conveying thousands of containers in both directions. Of course, the conclusions of the study of the NTUA regarding the project, which was done on the demand of the Ministry of Mercantile Marine, are exactly the opposite.

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