

NEWSLETTER

22W415 McCarron Road

Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

www.helleniclinkmidwest.org

EDITOR: Constantine Tzanos

EDITORIAL BOARD: G. Alexopoulos,
S. Sakellarides

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KRIKOS Midwest

A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC
LINK WITH GREECE

Upcoming Events

The Aegean and Greek-Turkish Relations

On Sunday, February 22, 1998, at 3:00 PM., at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 600 North State Street in Chicago, KRIKOS Midwest presents the Honorable Nicholas A. Zafiropoulos, Consul General of Greece in Chicago, in a lecture-discussion on the Aegean and Greek-Turkish Relations.

Since the invasion of Cyprus in 1974, Turkey is continuously escalating its provocations against Greece in the Aegean. After her recent failure to win inclusion in the list of states to be considered as candidates for membership in the European Union, Turkey has intensified its aggressive behavior against Greece with massive violations of the Athens Flight Information Region (FIR) and Greek airspace, extensive military exercises in the Aegean, and renewed disputes of sovereignty over many Greek rocky islets. Since the Imia incident about two years ago, it seems that Turkey is working hard to find an excuse to start a war against Greece.

On December 12, 1997, US Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon stated that "FIRs have been created to control the movement of civil aircraft and not military ones...we do not submit flight plans for military aircraft entering the Athens FIR. And I do not think we're planning to change this policy." On January 9, 1998, US State Department spokesman Jim Foley said "US and other countries do not recognize Greece's position for a ten-mile airspace in the Aegean. Therefore, we do not consider that Turkish, US or other aircraft flying in the zone between six and ten nautical miles from the Greek state are making a violation." The same day the US ambassador in Athens, Mr. Nicholas Burns, reiterated Washington's position that the limits of each country's airspace should correspond to those of its territorial waters, meaning that the US recognizes a six-mile limit for the Greek airspace. The Greek airspace has been set to a ten-mile limit by a 1931 presidential decree and has been respected as such even by Turkey for many

decades. According to international law, Greece has the right to extend its territorial waters to twelve nautical miles. Turkey has declared that if Greece would extend her territorial waters to ten miles, Turkey would consider it a *casus belli*. In a recent written statement, the Turkish foreign ministry said that "extending territorial waters to twelve miles is not a full right. According to international law, the highest level of extension is twelve miles, insofar as geographic characteristics allow it."

Mr. Zafiropoulos will discuss these issues on the Aegean in the context of international treaties, international law and practice and will present the Greek position and the Turkish motives.

Mr. Zafiropoulos holds a B.Sc. Degree in Economics from the University College of London and a Master's in Administrative Sciences from the City University of London. He joined the Greek Ministry for Foreign Affairs as Embassy Attache in 1971. Since then he has served at the Greek Embassies in Mexico and Washington DC, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens, and since 1995 he is the Consul General at the Consulate General of Greece in Chicago.

International Relations and Human Rights

KRIKOS Midwest had announced a panel discussion on *International Relations and Human Rights - The Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean* with Congressman Henry Hyde for February 1998. Because of recent events in Washington DC, Congressman Hyde requested to postpone this discussion for sometime in the near future. Note that Congressman Hyde is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

Krikos Midwest Annual Dinner Dance

Our Annual Dinner Dance will be on **Saturday, May 2**, at the *Fountain Blue*, 2300 Manheim Rd. in Desplaines, IL.

Celebration of Greek Independence Day

On Sunday, March 22, 1998, at 3:00 PM, at the St. John's Greek Orthodox Church of Desplaines IL., KRIKOS Midwest will present a celebration program for the Greek Independence Day.

The program includes:

The Memoirs of General Makriyiannis, a lecture-performance by *Yiannis Simonides*;

Songs from the Struggles of the Greek People for Freedom, by *Maria Foustalieraki*;

Dances from the Islands - A Dedication to the Heroes of the Greek Seas, by *Orpheus Dance Troupe*.

Yiannis Simonides will present, in Greek and English, excerpts from the Memoirs of General Makriyiannis, the legendary military leader who at young age emerged as a key general of the Greek Revolutionary army, and afterwards as one of the founders of the Modern Greek State and a formidable politician. Makriyiannis learned to read and write expressly in order to produce this extraordinary document of the period during and after the Greek War of Independence. On the basis of his Memoirs, his only opus, he has come to be regarded as one of the most important Greek literary figures of the last two centuries.

Yiannis Simonides is a Yale Drama School trained actor/writer and Emmy winning documentary producer. He is the founding director of the Greek Theater of New York and serves as president of the North American Foundation for Modern Greek Arts. He is former chairman of the NYU Tisch School of the Arts Undergraduate Drama Department, former executive producer of Greek Orthodox Telecommunications (GOTelecom), and current producer/host of the "Foundation Hour" on Hellenic Public Radio in New York City. His performance work has received the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Greek Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, the Hellenic Bank for Industrial Development, IBM, Time Warner, and the Mobil, Leventis and Kostopoulos Foundations.

Maria Foustalieraki-Takoudis will present songs that inspired or were inspired by the struggles of the Greek people for freedom and independence from four centuries of Ottoman rule.

Maria studied music theory, music education, conducting, and piano at the Public Conservatory of Thessaloniki and musicology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She holds a B.S. in Economics from the same University. She has received a Master's degree and a Ph.D. in Music Education at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, and she

has received an Orff-Schulwerk music education Certification from Hamline University, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Maria has received scholarship awards for academic excellence by several Greek and Greek-American organizations. She teaches music at Francis W. Parker School in Chicago and has extensive performing experience in both Greece and the U.S.

The *Orpheus Dance Troupe* has been performing Greek Folk Dances through the Midwest since 1989. The members of the Group are students and young adults from the Chicago area. The many performances of Orpheus include appearances at the United Center, Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago Historical Society, Hellenic Museum, Chicago Children's Museum International Festival, Illinois State Fair, Chicago Cultural Center and many College Campuses. Orpheus has been featured in the local media, like the Chicago Sun-Times, the Chicago Tribune, WLS-TV Channel 7, WBBM-TV Channel 2, Cable Access TV, and the Greek National TV and Radio.

A Love Affair: Modern Greek Music and Poetry

On Saturday May 17, 1998, KRIKOS Midwest will present an evening of Modern Greek Music and Poetry with Gail Holst-Warhaft.

The folk songs of many cultures are a marriage of folk poetry and music. What is unique in modern Greek culture, folk and non-folk, is the cross-fertilization of one tradition by another. The setting of high-brow poetry to low-brow urban folk music was one of the most exciting cultural movements in Europe. Unlike the traditional marriage of folk song with folk poem, the movement that began in the 60's in Greece was an illicit love affair. To hear Seferis sung by Bithikotsis, Elytis accompanied by bouzoukis, was a thrilling experience, all the more exciting because it was a combination that defied the rules.

Gail Holst-Warhaft travelled to Greece as a young girl and fell in love with the country at first sight. In the 70's she wrote her first book, *Road to Rebetika*, played in Theodorakis's orchestra and performed in Savopoulos's "Acharneis". Her second book, on Theodorakis, was published in 1980. She has also written on Greek laments, has translated all of Nikos Kavadias's poems into English, as well as books by Alki Zei and Iakovos Kambanelis. Gail Holst-Warhaft is professor of modern Greek literature at Cornell University.

The Church And The Future Of Greek Identity In America

By the Very Reverend Dr. Demetrios J. Constantelos

The question is: What threatens the survival of a Greek identity in America today and tomorrow? With more than 75 percent mixed marriages, with a number of Greek-Americans in non-Orthodox denominations who have lost interest in preserving an ethnic identity, and with many Greek Americans who prefer no religious affiliation or who are nominally Orthodox, the survival of a Greek identity is questioned. The survival of the Greek identity is undermined by the notion some have that the Greek-American community must become a community of religious concerns rather than a community based on a common heritage, as well as by the trend among some young priests to emphasize biblical fundamentalism and confuse ethnicity (the ethos) with phyletism. The preaching of some that the sooner we drop the name "Greek," the better for the Church, crops up every so often. Others maintain that the preservation of a Greek ethnic identity need no longer be encouraged by the Church. But what is the Church? Certainly not only priests, bishops, and archbishops, but mostly the baptized members of the Church community. It is the people who celebrate Greek national holidays and who like Greek dancing, Greek cooking, and Greek festivals that make up the Church. One must not idealize the nature of the Church's membership and their interests and feelings. That all of the above events can be encouraged by a variety of local organizations and fraternities goes without saying, but our perception of what the Church is cannot divorce it from the needs and desires of the people.

In order that I might be more realistic in my assessments, two years ago I sent out 15 pertinent questions to between 55 and 60 priests throughout the United States, pertaining to *"The Greek Orthodox Church and Greek Identity in Contemporary America."*

Question number one concerned the name of the Church, i.e., whether the Church should call itself "Greek Orthodox" or simply "Orthodox." There are parish leaders who maintain that "the sooner we drop the name Greek from the official designation of our Church, the better." I myself have heard this scenario several times beginning as early as my seminary days.

Of the 50 respondents, 18 strongly disagreed and 13 disagreed (31 in all) with the view that we should eliminate the term "Greek" from the name of the Church, while 8 agreed and 11 partially agreed that we should. It is evident that the majority of the responses (62 percent) indicated that the historic name "Greek" must be preserved and that the respondents saw it as necessary descriptive identity.

Those who are of the opinion that the Church should drop the epithet "Greek" from its official designation do not

have either a holistic knowledge and appreciation of Greek history or a good knowledge of the nature of Christianity. Some have fallen victim to simplistic biblical fundamentalism and uncritical apologetics. From as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, some Protestant scholars in their anti-Roman Catholic polemics tried to minimize the Greek (or Hellenic) intellectual and cultural background of Christianity and emphasized Christianity's supernatural uniqueness: Judaism rather than Hellenism, and faith rather than sophisticated doctrine, mystery, and ritual. Historical milieu and cultural conditioning have been stressed by both Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic scholarship. Today, scholars of early Christianity acknowledge the tremendous influence of Hellenism on post-exilic Judaism, as well as Christianity's debt to Hellenism - its language, philosophy, culture, and people.

To seek a divorce between Hellenism and Orthodoxy means to seek the mutilation of the Christian religion, whether in scripture, liturgy, mission, or doctrinal formulation. In the answers to question number one, I discerned a kind of "American" nationalism and a lack of understanding of the spiritual and intellectual values of Hellenism.

Question number two read: "The preservation of the Greek identity is important to me and my family." The answers indicated that even those who would like to drop the word "Greek" from the official designation of the Church see the preservation of the Greek identity as being very important to them and to their families. Of those who answered this question, 34 strongly agreed that the Greek identity must be preserved and 7 somewhat agreed. Only 4 responded that they do not consider the preservation of a Greek identity important.

Question number three read: "The preservation of a Greek identity is an impediment to the Church's mission." Thirty-two of the priests answered that they did not consider the preservation of the Greek identity as an impediment to the Church's apostolate, while 17 thought otherwise.

Is religion above culture or part of it? Where do you draw the line of separation between the two? Since, for historical reasons, Greek Orthodoxy has been identified with Greek culture, is it possible to separate the two? Another question of my survey sought to find out whether our parish priests and theologians see the possibility of a separation between the Church and cultural identity. In this question, the following statement was made: "Separation of Church and cultural identity is impossible," and the respondents were asked "What do you think?" The overwhelming majority of the answers to this question (40 in all) strongly agreed that separation of Church and Greek cultural identity was

impossible. Only 3 strongly disagreed, and 6 partially agreed. It seems that those who disagreed have idealized the Church and see it not only as a divine institution but also as an institution above culture and human conditioning.

But is not the preservation of the Greek language in the liturgical life of the Church a problem? Some expected that the adoption of the English language in all Church liturgies and services would serve as a panacea which would increase attendance, invite new members, and convert non-Orthodox who would serve as our most effective missionaries. When asked in the survey whether exclusive use of English in all services would solve our Church problems, the majority of the correspondents (71 percent) answered "no"! Over the last 25 years, English has been widely introduced in many Churches as a result of the 1970 Clergy-Laity Congress, and this period has revealed that the language issue has been used as a subterfuge. Native American churches have more problems than the Greek Orthodox Church even though English is their established language. The decline in attendance in some Orthodox churches must be attributed to other factors. The paradox is that, in my experience, the first to come to services are converts, who know no Greek at all. The majority of the clergymen subscribe to the belief that the Orthodox Church in America requires bilingualism and that the faithful cannot be divided between an "elite" American-born and an "immigrant" Greek-born, even though there are some communities where the issue exists and is even silently cultivated by priests and openly encouraged by lay people.

While Orthodoxy's message can be proclaimed in any language, there is no justification for the American-born Greek Orthodox to abandon their rich heritage. They feel that the denial of the word "Greek" in the title of the Church means loss of affiliation with the Church in history. Stripped of its descriptive identity, it becomes just another of the numerous Christian denominations and sects, and its people will be swallowed up by a non-ecclesial mentality or simplistic fundamentalism.

My survey indicates that language and ethnicity are not impediments to an authentic Orthodox unity in America, rather they are an enrichment to Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. The pressing problems that Greek Orthodoxy and indeed Eastern Orthodoxy face in America must be sought elsewhere. This is further confirmed by the answers I received to the last of my fifteen questions, which read: "Would you like to see the Greek cultural identity preserved in America?" Forty-eight of the respondents answered with a resounding "yes," and only two replied that it made no difference to them.

On the basis of the comments of the respondents to my questionnaire and also my personal experience as a regular

or visiting pastor, lecturer, and teacher for nearly 40 years, I need to add that a kind of dichotomy exists in the mind and activity of the Greek Orthodox Church in America. While most of the clergy emphasize the congregation's need to have a spiritual life and they try to promote the religious aspects of Church life, there are both clergymen and lay leaders who believe that religion cannot be divorced from the social and cultural needs of the community.

Throughout the history of the Greek Orthodox community, a strong association between religion and ethnicity has been a mark of the community's identity. Religion is part of the totality of the individual's life. Whether because of historical circumstances or whether intentionally pursued, ethnicity and religious life have been blended into a mutually reinforcing system which has sustained a Greek identity in the diaspora. The question is which of the two - ethnicity as the sense of belonging to the same linguistic and cultural group, or religion, i.e., Orthodox Christianity - is the key institutional factor that needs to survive and be sustained in a multisectarian, multilingual, and multiracial America. Will Greek Americans be able to retain this historical interrelationship? For the Greek immigrants and first American-born generation, Greek Orthodoxy and the Greek language were the principal dynamics that shaped their Greek-American identity. If the Greek language continues to decline and emphasis is placed more and more on church-related activities, will the Greek-American identity survive?

It is my experience that a balance between religious life and ethnic activities has been the rule in most Greek Orthodox communities. But now there are more assertive community leaders-clergy and mostly lay people-who insist on the development of a totally English-speaking Orthodox Church, eliminating ethnic names and non-English languages. They advocate a shifting of the ethnic boundaries, removing them outside the Church to social clubs and cultural or regional societies, which include the Pan-Macedonian, Pan-Arcadian, and Pan-Cretan societies.

Nevertheless, while some communities are contracting their ethnic activities and expanding their religious networks, other communities are multiplying their ethnic activities and promoting cultural features relevant to their understanding of religion's relationship with cultural ethnicity. Several illustrations from both large and small communities in the eastern states demonstrate that Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy have achieved a convergence.

