

1821 AND ITS AMERICAN CONNECTION

Dr. Stamatios Kartalopoulos

Reverend fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ, good evening.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on a subject that is very near my heart.

On March 25th every year, as Greek Orthodox, we celebrate two very important theological and historical events:

The *Annunciation of the Theotokos*, and, the start of the *War for Independence in Greece, in 1821*, against the Ottoman Empire.

I leave it to Father to share with us the historical and theological importance of the Annunciation, so, my presentation relates to the other historical event of the day.

200 years ago, after almost four centuries of Ottoman oppression, the Greeks revolted in **1821** to regain their freedom.

The U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, *Henry Morgenthau*, summarized the Ottoman oppression with these words:

“for centuries the Turks simply lived like parasites upon these overburdened and industrious people (the Greeks). They taxed them to economic extinction, stole their most beautiful daughters and forced them into their harems, took Christian male infants by the hundreds of thousands and brought them up as Moslem soldiers (the Janissaries)”,

You have children ... if this would happen to you, **what would you have done?**

In 1821, the Greeks were very few. They had no military training, and no organization. They had no military equipment, and no battleships.

They were against a mega-empire that had hundreds of thousands of armed soldiers, and a navy equipped with modern guns.

At the time, the Ottoman navy was the most powerful in the Mediterranean.

But Greeks had something no one else had: deep **faith in God**, and **unshakeable patriotism** that was based on a *strong foundation of democratic ideas and values*.

They had the *Hellenic Spirit*. For thousands of years, it was handed down from generation to generation. Like a beacon, its light shined to the civilized world. Four centuries of oppression could not dim this light.

In its historical context, the Greek War for Independence in 1821 took place in a period known as the *Age of Revolution* (roughly 1763-1848).

In this period, another war for Independence had taken place in colonial America, the *American Revolution* (1765-1783).

You might be surprised to learn the connection between the two.

On July 4, 1776, the *U.S. Declaration of Independence* was adopted by the Second Continental Congress, at the Pennsylvania State House, in Philadelphia. Then, our American forefathers searched for the best democratic ideas to define the *Constitution of the United States of America*.

They found many ideas in the ancient constitutions of the Hellenistic **Lycian League** (a confederation of 23 ancient Greek cities in Lycia, Asia Minor), and in the **Achaean League** in Peloponnese, and in the **Athenian democracy**. [see Federalist Papers #6 and #23]

In September 1787, Alexander Hamilton wrote:

“Were I to give a model (to the Constitution) of an excellent ... Republic, it would be that of Lycia”. [Federalist Paper #9].

Similarly, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison wrote:

“The Achaean League was another Greek society of Greek republics, which supplies us (the Americans) with valuable instruction”. [see Federalist Paper #18].

The *American Constitution* was signed on September 17, 1787, in Philadelphia. These principles of representation as well as the Federation concept became part of the American model.

This model of American democracy impressed the whole of Europe, which the French political philosopher and statesman Alexis de Tocqueville described in 1835 in his book with title “*American Democracy*”.

The Greek revolution on March 25, 1821, with the support of Greeks in the Diaspora and the Phanariots, spread like wildfire. Once again, the few Greeks, men and women, proved they could stand up against the many. And like their ancestors at *Marathon*, *Thermopylae*, and elsewhere, they fought valiantly. Among them, Kolokotronis, Bouboulina, Kanaris, Manto Mavrogenous, to mention a few. We’ve all heard these names.

The story of their bravery inspired hundreds of intellectuals and peasants in Europe, rich and poor, all friends of the Hellenic ideas. These *Philhellenes* responded to the Greek cause in many different ways. Among them *Lord Byron*, *Count Santarosa*, *François Pouqueville*, and many others.

The U.S. government, for political and other reasons, remained neutral in the affairs of Europe and did not get involved in the war of the Greeks [see *The Monroe Doctrine*].

However, the ***Hellenic Spirit*** was already interwoven in the fabric of the American society.

And while the war in Greece was being fought, on December 3, 1822, U.S. President James Monroe in his *State of the Union* address to the Congress said:

“The mention of Greece fills the mind with the most exalted sentiments.... That such a country should have been overwhelmed and so long hidden from the world under a gloomy despotism...”

Several years before the Greek Revolution, a young Greek intellectual and physician, Adamantios Koras, had met Thomas Jefferson in Paris. Thereafter, they often exchanged philosophical and political ideas. On October 21, 1823, Thomas Jefferson wrote to his friend Koras:

“no people sympathize more feelingly than ours (the Americans) with the suffering of your countrymen (the Greeks), none offer more sincere and ardent prayers to heaven for their success”.

Similarly, on December 2, 1823, in his *State of the Union* address President James Monroe said:

“A strong hope is entertained, founded on the heroic struggle of the Greeks, that they would succeed in their contest and resume their equal station among the nations of the earth.”

U.S. Massachusetts Representative Daniel Webster, on January 19, 1824, delivered a speech in the House of Representatives, and said of the Greeks:

...this gallant people, the best sailors in the Mediterranean, a people of knowledge, refinement, spirit, and civilized, have been for centuries under pillaging, savage, relentless soldiery and barbarism,

and also,

“The Turk has now been encamped in Europe for four centuries”.

“They came in by the sword, and they govern by the sword”.

Many American citizens responded to the Greek cause and in many different ways. Among them *George Jarvis*, *Dr. Samuel Howe*, *Jonathan Miller*, *William Bryant*, and many others. Many cities organized *Greek Relief Funds*, and shipped clothing, food items and medical supplies to Greece. Similarly, American Colleges, Churches and U.S. Army officers contributed funds. Theaters staged productions and dedicated the proceeds to the Greek cause. And, in admiration of their bravery, cities in the U.S. were named after heroes of the Greek War for Independence, such as *Ypsilanti*, Michigan (in 1826), after Ypsilantis.

The ***American Philia to Greece***, or *Philhellenism*, can be seen in the Hellenic-inspired architecture that adorns Washington, D.C., and many other cities.

I share this so that we can all appreciate the close historical relationship of Greeks and Americans, which is based on common values, *Freedom and Democracy*. ***We, Greek-Americans, should be truly proud of it.***

In 1827, with the intervention of Britain, France and Russia, particularly after the gross defeat of the Ottomans at the *Battle of Navarino*, Greece was recognized a sovereign country. The Greeks were officially free.

The success of the Greek War for Independence and the American democracy inspired others. In 1848, peoples in 50 European countries under monarchical rule demanded their freedom and democratic processes. This is known as the ***Springtime of the Nations***.

Today, Greece and its islands are free, and Greece is a member of the United Nations and of the European Union. Greece plays an important role in Europe, in the Balkans and in Eastern Mediterranean.

And Greece is recognized as **one of the most beautiful places in the world**.

But, is the struggle between Greece and Turkey over? Of course not.

A “war” is not manifested with guns, alone. It can be social, economic, political, cultural, demographic, and religious. Its weapons can be violations of human rights, propaganda, and can take many other forms.

For example:

Currently, Greece endures enormous pressure, particularly from some of its neighbors, who re-invent history, and make gross historical misrepresentations.

Turkey has been teaching in public schools, that the “Turks” have been in Asia Minor many thousands of years, before the Greeks ever arrived, and Greek culture and architecture are all Turkish!

Such historical misrepresentations are not new and were also identified by many. British Professor Arnold J. Toynbee, in 1915 described what Turkish pupils were taught in their public schools (listen carefully):

“the (Byzantine) church is a monument of Seljuk art, Turkish was the original language of the country and it was spoken by Lydians, Phrygians and Hittites before their temporary Hellenization!”; that is, before the Greeks came. - **Revisionist history hard at work!**

Remember that, the Turkic peoples, in the 6th century, were *nomads in the steppes of central Asia*. They lived in tents and had no written language.

In contrast, in the 6th century (the same period), the Greek-Byzantines had built *Hagia Sophia* in Constantinople, *the largest Cathedral of its time*, a wonder of Byzantine and world architecture and engineering.

Many centuries later, the Sultans arrived, and admired and envied Greek-Byzantine culture and architecture. Since Turkic peoples had no architecture of their own, the Sultans commissioned their Imperial chief-architects to design and build their public buildings. Guess who these Imperial architects were: *Christodoulos of Constantinople*, his nephew *Iakovos of Constantinople*, *Ioseph Doganoglou* of Hagioi Anargyroi, in Cappadocia, and others. These architects, using Hagia Sophia as a prototype, built a plethora of Mosques, madrassas and fountains throughout the empire.

This is the architecture which the Sultans called...Ottoman!

In recent times, Turkey has repeatedly violated the humanitarian rules of the *Nations of the World*, before and after the ***Treaty of Lausanne of 1923***.

Extensive atrocities and massacres, including Bishops and priests, pushed Greeks out of Pontos, Aeolis, Ionia (Smyrna, Karaburun or Mimas, Ayvalik or Kydonies, Tsesme or Krene), Imbros and Tenedos, to mention a few.

A ***staged pogrom in September 1955*** pushed the Orthodox Greeks out of Constantinople (Istanbul). The ***invasion of Northern Cyprus in 1974***, forced the Greek-Cypriots out their homes, businesses and land.

Within Turkey, in 1914, there were 250 Christians to every 1,000 inhabitants. and in 2018 there were 2 Christians to every 1,000.

So, does the “war” continue? Emphatically, **Yes**, but Turkey’s tactics have changed.

The Turkish government accuses Greece, Europe and the world of *Islamophobia*. At the same time, *in the name of Religious Freedom*, the Turks exercise their right in democratic countries, including the U.S. They build many new Mosques, most modelled after Hagia Sophia, and many funded by the Turkish government.

Of the thousands of Christian churches and monasteries in Turkey, most have been demolished, or converted to social clubs, or to Mosques. Just few months ago, despite the worldwide outcry, the Hagia Sophia Museum and the Hora Museum, both UNESCO-protected, were arbitrarily converted to Mosques.

And, as we speak, the **Ecumenical Patriarchate** in Istanbul (Constantinople) still endures **pressure in many forms**, despite the many efforts of the **Archons** of the order of St Andrew.

And **sadly, the Theological School of Halki remains closed, since 1971.**

Conversely, thousands of Islamic Charter Schools have been established around the world, hundreds in the United States, and dozens in Florida, under unassuming names. In the U.S., they are funded by taxpayer money, your money, at tens of million dollars, annually. It was reported this month that Turkish school-books have introduced changes that foster anti-American and anti-democratic sentiments to its pupils. Additional changes introduce the “*jihad war*” that glorifies Islamic martyrdom, and characterizes Christians and Jews (even if they are Turkish citizens) as “*gavur*” or “*infidels*”.

And, just few days ago, Turkey withdrew from the 2011 *Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*, which raises the concern of many democratic countries, including the U.S.

Finally, Greece receives from Turkey an enormous influx of illegal Islamic immigrants and war refugees, thus changing the demographics of many islands and cities.

We repeat what James Madison had cautioned us [see Federalist paper #63]:

“*Liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty*”.

Today, as we celebrate the *Evangelismos of the Theotokos* with *reverence*, and the *Bicentennial of the Greek Independence* with *pride, admiration, and gratitude* to our ancestors for our *freedoms* and *well-being*, we should continue remaining firm and strong in our Christian faith and our Hellenic values.

In closing, I repeat what President George H. W. Bush said to Archbishop Iakovos, when signing the *Greek Independence Day Proclamation*, on March 25, 1991. He said:

“*March 25th marks several turning points in history. Americans and Greeks share many common values, ...*

***This is just one example of the common ideals and values the people of Greece and America hold so dear: freedom, democracy, human rights, and justice.*”**

Thank you.

FURTHER READING:

- [1] Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, 1918; accessible at <https://archive.org/details/ambassadormorge00morggoog>, retrieved March 2021.
- [2] According to Strabo, *Lykiakon Systema* (Geography, 8).
- [3] Polybius, *The Histories*, book 25.
- [4] Polybius, *The Histories*, books 2, 4, 5, 22, 28.
- [5] Livy, *History of Rome*, books 32, 35, 38, 41.6.8-12.
- [6] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 7.
- [7] Federalist Paper #6, November 14, 1787.
- [8] Federalist Paper #23, December 18, 1787.
- [9] Federalist Paper #9, November 21, 1787.
- [10] Federalist Paper #18, December 7, 1787.
- [11] Alexis de Tocqueville, *American Democracy*, 1848; accessible at https://archive.org/details/democracy_america_voll_0709, retrieved March 2021.
- [12] Digital Library of Congress (DLC): Speeches of the Presidents, accessible at [James Monroe, 1822 State of the Union Address—December 3, 1822 \(presidentialrhetoric.com\)](https://www.presidentialrhetoric.com)
- [13] Edwin P. Whipple, *Great Speeches and Orations of Daniel Webster: The Revolution in Greece*, 1886, p. 57-76.
- [14] Baron de Montesquieu also wrote: “*The Mahomedan religion, which speaks only by the sword, acts still upon men with that destructive spirit with which it was founded.*” [*The Spirit of Laws*, in English, vol. 2, ed. 1900, p. 30], at <https://archive.org/details/spiritoflaws02baro>.
- [15] Digital Library of Congress: Papers of Thomas Jefferson.
- [16] Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, 1922, p. 129; accessible at <https://archive.org/details/westernquestioni00toynrich>, retrieved March 2021.
- [17] In Ottoman Turkish, Christodoulos was known as Sinan-I Atik, Iakobos as Yacup, and Joseph Doganoglou as Mimar Koca Sinan.
- [18] BBC News, *Turkey's declining Christianity*, 25 July 2018.
- [19] Ahval, “Turkey school curriculum radicalized with Jihad, sympathies for ISIS-study”, March 6, 2021, 07:15 Gmt+3, at <http://ahval.co/en-111087>, and Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak, “The Erdoğan Revolution in the Turkish Curriculum Textbooks”, IMPACT-se in conjunction with Henry Jackson Society, March 2021, at <https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Erdogan-Revolution-in-the-Turkish-CurriculumTextbooks.pdf>.
- [20] Federalist paper #63, March 1, 1788.
- [21] In general, a *charter school* is a school that operates independently of the established state school system in which it is located. It operates according to the basic principle of autonomy for accountability, that is, it is freed from the rules but accountable for results, and it receives government funding available from both the state and federal departments of education.
- [22] Official Gazzette of Turkey (Resmi Gazete), 20 Mart 2021 CUMARTESİ, at <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2021/03/20210320-49.pdf>, and at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul_Convention#cite_note-42.
- [23] Public Papers of the Presidents (PPP) of the U.S., vol 1, 1991.