

years ago, after the fall of Constantinople, Bishop Germanos of Patras raised the Greek flag at Agia Lavras, sparking a powerful revolution against the Ottoman oppressors.

Citing the values and priorities that led to the establishment of our own country here in the United States, the Greek commander chief, Petros Mavromichalis, once proclaimed that "in imitating you, we shall imitate our ancestors and be thought worthy of them if we succeed in resembling you . . . it is for you, citizens of America, to crown this glory."

Following the triumphs of 1821, Greece continued to prove itself as a loyal ally of the United States and an internationally recognized advocate of democracy. Greece is one of only three nations in the world beyond those of the former British Empire to be allied with the United States in every major international conflict of the 20th century.

From the trenches of World War I to the barren fields of Desert Storm, Greece remains faithful to the implementation and sustainment of democracy. Most recently in the Balkans, Greece has played a steady hand of democracy in the face of regional unrest and instability.

Mr. Speaker, we depend on Greece more than ever today. As conflict spreads in the neighboring former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece's role as a stable democracy and key NATO ally becomes more important. All eyes now turn to young leaders in the Mediterranean like Greece's Foreign Minister Papandreou to advise us on the path of peace.

A path to peace. Would that we could have one in Cyprus, divided by a cold war barrier that is as ugly as it is outdated.

We look with hope at the new Bush administration and their role in bringing together the leaders from Ankara, Nicosia, Athens to find peace.

Greece is a special jewel of beauty in the Mediterranean from the ecology of Patmos to the vibrant Rembetiko of the Plaka.

I want to wish a hearty congratulations to the Greek people and pay special regards to one of the leading Greek-Americans of northern Illinois, State Senator Adeline Geo-Karis of Zion, who is one of our true leaders. I am sure she will correct all of my pronunciation in the Greek language.

We wish the Greek people well. To Greece, we say to a free and democratic ally: Cronia polla hellas.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCHROCK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHROCK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AIDS PANDEMIC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of Jan-

uary 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, tonight I would like to begin by thanking Minority Leader GEPHARDT for allowing tonight's Special Orders to be held to increase the awareness of the AIDS pandemic which is reeking havoc on Africa, the Caribbean, and many other developing nations throughout the world. Africa, however, is the epicenter of this human tragedy.

I rise tonight to express my strong opposition to the lawsuit filed against the South African government by 39 pharmaceutical companies. In 1997, the South African government passed the Medicines Act which would allow the manufacturing and the importation of generic life-saving AIDS medicines. Through this lawsuit, however, the pharmaceuticals would all but halt those opportunities; and this is just downright wrong.

While this suit has been postponed at the request of the pharmaceutical companies, it is slated to be heard by the South African Justice Department in the near future. Should this lawsuit proceed, there is a dangerous potential for life-saving AIDS medicines to be pushed further out of reach for AIDS patients and communities throughout the world and for those who need them the most.

While some pharmaceutical companies have taken steps to lower the costs of these medications, and I applaud their initiatives, life-saving medications still remain far out of reach for millions of people living with AIDS. Ninety percent of the world's 36 million people with HIV face a death sentence, a death sentence because they cannot afford medication because they are poor and because they live in the developing world.

For example, in countries like Zimbabwe and Swaziland, the average life expectancy was 65 to 70 years of age. As a direct impact of AIDS, those rates have decreased to 30 to 35 years of age. This is staggering. In Zimbabwe, it is estimated that one-quarter of all Zimbabweans are infected with HIV. In Botswana, there is a 50 percent chance that teenage girls and boys will contract HIV if a sustained strategy to prevent new HIV infections is not instituted.

In wealthy countries, including the United States, people living with AIDS is treatable. In all of Africa, where more than 70 percent of HIV cases are concentrated and where more than 70

percent of AIDS deaths have already occurred, HIV-infected people face painful, painful death, with no hope of treatment because the essential AIDS medications are just too expensive. They want the drugs but cannot afford the prices set by drug companies.

We must not tolerate the current policy which dictates that life with a manageable illness is possible if one is wealthy or if one has money; however, death from AIDS is certain if one is poor.

The African AIDS crisis has spurred a tremendous public outcry for relief, and AIDS patients are demanding the right to live and demanding the basic human right to affordable treatment.

The South African Medicines Act provides the crucial legal clearance required for South Africa to obtain affordable life-extending generic HIV drugs. But the drug companies claim that the South African Medicines Act is criminal and unfairly robs them of their rights to unfettered patent monopoly. But I say that this lawsuit is criminal.

Everyone from international patent experts to the World Health Organization agrees that the South African Medicine Act is perfectly legally sound. While drug companies paralyze the Medicines Act in court, South Africans face preventable deaths.

According to UNAIDS, every day, 6,000, 6,000 more South Africans die from AIDS. The continent of Africa accounts for only 1.3 percent of the global pharmaceutical market in part because the average person lives on less than \$300 per year. That is \$300 per year, while the average AIDS treatment may cost as much as \$15,000 per year.

The multinational pharmaceutical industry is not concerned with African profits. But the drug industry fears the growing awareness on the part of American taxpayers that pills cost pennies to manufacture. The drug industry also fears that the growing awareness that a large percentage of research and development costs are born by United States taxpayers, and the taxpayer-funded inventions are often licensed for a pittance to the world's most profitable industry.

The drug industry fears that this growing awareness will reduce the willingness of United States consumers and public programs to continue to pay the extraordinarily high prices in our own country.

While I call on the United States Congress to stand with the South African government and with people living with AIDS fighting this lawsuit, we must also redouble our efforts in ending this devastating crisis in South Africa, in the Caribbean, everywhere where drug company profiteering keeps essential drugs out of reach of the poor.

We must oppose the lawsuit in South Africa, instead offer concrete support to countries committed to curtailing the AIDS crisis through access to affordable treatment.