

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Greek people on the 183d anniversary of their independence, and I join my colleagues in thanking them for their vast contributions to world civilization and especially to our Nation.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, first I would say that I am very pleased to be doing this special order in conjunction with the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), who has been very stellar, a great friend of both republics, Greece and Cyprus, all through the years. And today I too proudly rise to celebrate Greek Independence Day and the strong ties that bind the nation of Greece and the United States.

One hundred and eighty-three years ago, the people of Greece began a journey that would mark a symbolic rebirth of democracy in the land, in the land where those principles of human dignity were first espoused.

They rebelled against more than 400 years of Turkish oppression. The revolution of 1821 brought independence to Greece and emboldened those who still sought freedom across the world.

I commemorate Greek Independence Day each year for the same reasons that we celebrate our July 4. It proved that a united people through sheer will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny.

Men such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and Euripides developed a then-unique notion that men could, if left to their own devices, lead themselves rather than be subject to the will of a sovereign. It was Aristotle who said, "We make war that we may live in peace." On March 25, 1821, Archbishop Germanos of Patras embodied the spirit of those words when he raised the flag of freedom and was the first to declare Greece free.

Revolutions embody a sense of heroism, bringing forth the greatness of the American spirit. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "To the ancient Greeks we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves," American colonists, "out of gothic darkness." Quoting Jefferson on the anniversary of Greek Independence is particularly appropriate. Jefferson and the rest of the Founding Fathers looked back to the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers for inspiration as they sought to craft a strong democratic state. In 1821, the Greeks looked to our Founding Fathers for inspiration when they began their journey toward freedom.

Although many lives were sacrificed at the altar of freedom, the Greek people rallied around the battle cry, "Eleftheria I Thanatos," "liberty or death," mirroring of course the words of American Patriot Patrick Henry who said "Give me liberty or give me

death." These words personified the Greek patriots' unmitigated desire to be free.

We all know that the price of liberty can be very high. History is replete with the names of the millions who have sacrificed for it. Many great scholars throughout history warned that we maintain democracy only at great cost. The freedom we enjoy today is due to a large degree to the sacrifices made by men and women in the past, in Greece, in America, and all over the world.

Freedom is America's heart. It is central to our being, and from the beginning we have recognized that freedom is not just an American right, it is a God-given right to every citizen of the world.

We must never forget that freedom must be constantly guarded. It is a noble but fragile thing that can be stolen or snuffed out if not protected. We cannot take for granted that we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. We enjoy our freedom only because we have been willing to fight and die for it just like our forefathers and the valiant Greeks in 1821.

Mr. Speaker, on this 183rd birthday of Greek Independence, when we celebrate the restoration of democracy to its conception, we also celebrate the triumph of the human spirit and the strength of man's will. The goals and values that the people of Greece share with the people of the United States reaffirm our common democratic heritage. This occasion also serves to remind us that we must never take for granted the right to determine our own fate.

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They rebelled against more than 400 years of Turkish oppression. The revolution of 1821 brought independence to Greece and emboldened those who still sought freedom across the world. I commemorate Greek Independence Day each year for the same reasons we celebrate our Fourth of July. It proved that a united people, through sheer will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny. The lessons the Greeks and our colonial forefathers taught us provide hope and inspiration to victims of persecution throughout the world today.

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"One man with courage is a majority." Quoting Jefferson on the anniversary of Greek independence is particularly appropriate. Jefferson, and the rest of the Founding Fathers, looked back to the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers for inspiration as they sought to craft a strong democratic state. And in 1821, the Greeks looked to our Founding Fathers for inspiration when they began their journey toward freedom.

The history of Greek independence, like that of the American Revolution, is filled with many stories of courage and heroism. There are many parallels between the American and Greek Revolutions.

Encouraged by the American Revolution, the Greeks began their rebellion after four centuries of Turkish oppression, facing what appeared to be insurmountable odds. Both nations faced the prospect of having to defeat an empire to obtain liberty. And if Samuel Adams, the American revolutionary leader who lit the first spark of rebellion by leading the Boston Tea Party, had a Greek counterpart, that man would be Alexander Ypsilantis.

Ypsilantis was born in Istanbul, and his family was later exiled to Russia. Ypsilantis served in the Russian army, and it was there, during his military service, that he became involved with a secret society called the "Philike Hetairia," which translated means "friendly society." The "friendly society" was made up of merchants and other Greek leaders, but the intent of the society was to seek freedom for Greece and her people.

The group planned a secret uprising for 1821 to be led by Ypsilantis. He and 4,500 volunteers assembled near the Russian border to launch an insurrection against the Turks. The Turkish army massacred the ill-prepared Greek volunteers, and Ypsilantis was caught and placed in prison, where he subsequently died. However, the first bells of liberty had been rung, and Greek independence would not be stopped.

When news of Greek uprisings spread, the Turks killed Greek clergymen, clerics, and laity in a frightening display of force. In a vicious act of vengeance, the Turks invaded the island of Chios and slaughtered 25,000 of the local residents. The invaders enslaved half the island's population of 100,000.

Although many lives were sacrificed at the altar of freedom, the Greek people rallied around the battle cry "Eleftheria I Thanatos" "liberty or death," mirroring the words of American Patriot Patrick Henry who said: "Give me liberty or give me death." These words personified the Greek patriots' unmitigated desire to be free.

Another heroic Greek whom many believe was the most important figure in the revolution was Theodoros Kolokotronis. He was the leader of the Klephts, a group of rebellious and resilient Greeks who refused to submit to Turkish subjugation. Kolokotronis used military strategy he learned while in the service of the English Army to organize a force of over 7,000 men. The Klephts swooped down on the Turks from their mountain strongholds, battering their oppressors into submission.

One battle in particular, where Kolokotronis led his vastly outnumbered forces against the Turks, stands out. The Turks had invaded the Peloponnese with 30,000 men. Kolokotronis led his force, which was outnumbered by a ration of 4 to 1, against the Turkish army. A fierce battle ensued and many lives were lost,

but after a few weeks, the Turks were forced to retreat. Kolokotronis is a revered Greek leader, because he embodied the hopes and dreams of the common man, while displaying extraordinary courage and moral fiber in the face of overwhelming odds.

Athanasios Diakos was another legendary hero, a priest, a patriot, and a soldier. He led 500 of his men in a noble stand against 8,000 Ottoman soldiers. Diakos' men were wiped out and he fell into the enemy's hands, where he was severely tortured before his death. He is the image of a Greek who gave all for love of faith and homeland. While individual acts of bravery and leadership are often noted, the Greek Revolution was remarkable for the bravery and fortitude displayed by the typical Greek citizen. This heroic ideal of sacrifice and service is best demonstrated through the story of the Suliotes, villagers who took refuge from Turkish authorities in the mountains of Epiros. The fiercely patriotic Suliotes bravely fought the Turks in several battles. News of their victories spread throughout the region and encouraged other villages to revolt. The Turkish Army acted swiftly and with overwhelming force to quell the Suliote uprising.

The Suliote women were alone as their husbands battled the Turks at the front. When they learned that Turkish troops were fast approaching their village, they began to dance the Syrtos, a patriotic Greek dance. One by one, rather than face torture or enslavement at the hands of the Turks, they committed suicide by throwing themselves and their children off Mount Zalongo. They chose to die rather than surrender their freedom.

The sacrifice of the Suliotes was repeated in the Arkadi Monastery of Crete. Hundreds of noncombatants, mainly the families of the Cretan freedom fighters, had taken refuge in the monastery to escape Turkish reprisals. The Turkish army was informed that the Monastery was used by the Cretan freedom fighters as an arsenal for their war material, and they set out to seize it. As the Turkish troops were closing in, the priest gathered all the refugees in the cellar around him. With their consent, he set fire to the gunpowder kegs stored there, killing all but a few. The ruins of the Arkadi Monastery, like the ruins of our Alamo, still stand as a monument to liberty.

News of the Greek revolution met with widespread feelings of compassion in the United States. The Founding Fathers eagerly expressed sentiments of support for the fledgling uprising. Several American Presidents, including James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, conveyed their support for the revolution through their annual messages to Congress. William Harrison, our ninth president, expressed his belief in freedom for Greece, saying: "We must send our free will offering. 'The Star-spangled Banner' must wave in the Aegean . . . a messenger of fraternity and friendship to Greece."

Various Members of Congress also showed a keen interest in the Greeks' struggle for autonomy. Henry Clay, who in 1825 became Secretary of State, was a champion of Greece's fight for independence. Among the most vocal was Daniel Webster from Massachusetts, who frequently roused the sympathetic interest of his colleagues and other Americans in the Greek revolution.

It should not surprise us that our Founding Fathers would express such keen support for Greek independence, for they themselves had

been inspired by the ancient Greeks in their own struggle for freedom. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "To the ancient Greeks . . . we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves . . . American colonists, out of gothic darkness." Our two nations share a brotherhood bonded by the common blood of democracy, birthed by Lady Liberty, and committed to the ideal that each individual deserves the right of self-determination.

We all know that the price of liberty can be very high—history is replete with the names of the millions who have sacrificed for it. Many great scholars throughout history warned that we maintain democracy only at great cost. The freedom we enjoy today is due to a large degree to the sacrifices made by men and women in the past—in Greece, in America, and all over the world.

I recount these stories because they pay homage to Greece's absolute commitment to freedom and liberty and the common bonds which we share. Unfortunately, our devotion to the principle of freedom is not shared by many people whose interests are better served by applying oppression to their own people and spreading terrors elsewhere.

Freedom is America's heart. It is central to our being, and from the beginning we have recognized that freedom is not just an American right. It is a God-given right to every citizen of the world.

We must not overlook those who are still fighting for their independence in other parts of the world, such as in the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey still illegally occupies Cyprus, as it has since its invasion in 1974. Finding a fair resolution for Cyprus will help stabilize a region marked more often by conflict than accord.

As with so many international issues, U.S. leadership is essential to urge Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders toward peace. One year after United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed his plan as a basis for negotiations between the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriot leadership finally agreed to restart the negotiations. The proposed plan aims at reuniting the island under a government of shared power and having the united island admitted to the European Union on May 1, 2004. This is a vision worthy of our attention and full support because it has the potential to end the illegitimate division of Cyprus, improve the relations between Turkey and Greece and promote stability in the sensitive region of Eastern Mediterranean.

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

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

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the special order time of the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

POLICING REFORMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, last week the Helsinki Commission, also known as the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held a hearing on the issue of policing in Northern Ireland. I want to commend the commission for holding this hearing on this timely issue and to add my voice to a growing list of influential individuals who have called on the British Government to reform the police service of Northern Ireland.

Madam Speaker, 6 years ago this month, the people of Northern Ireland, Great Britain, and the Republic of Ireland entered into a peace agreement, commonly referred to as the Good Friday Agreement. This legendary accord set out a framework that would allow Northern Ireland to govern itself and provide for a rule of law that was responsible to all people in the north of Ireland. Unfortunately, 6 years later, much of the agreement has either been stalled, derailed, or simply never implemented.

Most notably, the one issue that the British Government has refused to address after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement is that of police reform. For a true and lasting peace to exist in Northern Ireland, reforming the police service is a must.

Madam Speaker, the Good Friday Agreement gave the people of Northern Ireland great hope that they would see a change in the way policing is handled. Soon after the agreement was signed, the British Government commissioned Christopher Patten to review the police service in Northern Ireland. The Patten Commission spent months researching past abuses by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Eventually they recommended several reforms to policing in Northern Ireland, including the end of the "Special Branch" of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and also to begin a program that would recruit ethnic and religious minorities into the police service and create a process of civil review.