

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANT
GREEK HOLIDAYS APPROACHING:
CYPRIOT INDEPENDENCE DAY
AND GREECE'S "OXI DAY"

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2006

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on Oct. 1, we will celebrate Cypriot Independence Day, and at the end of October, the 28th, we will remember Greece's "Oxi Day," commemorating the Greek decision to reject and resist occupation by the Axis Powers in 1940 during World War II. I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering and reflecting on these special days in Greek and Cypriot history.

Greek pride and bravery during the independence struggle in the 1820s forged the first successful war for self-determination in the modern era. This Greek example has fired the imagination of oppressed peoples ever since, including the Jews whose struggle for liberation resulted in the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Both Jews and Greeks over the years have had to supply in brains and pluck what they lacked in numbers.

Ever since throwing off the yoke of dictatorship in 1974, the Greek people have been one of Europe's amazing success stories. Greece entered the European Economic Community and never looked back. Today it is a model of growth and prosperity, and for more than three decades it has been a vibrant paragon of the gift it gave the world so long ago, democracy.

Since 1974 the little nation of Cyprus has suffered immensely. All the more remarkable then that Cyprus has taught the world the lesson of how to endure difficult circumstances with uncommon grace, dignity, strength, and commitment to humane values. Notwithstanding the horrors 200,000 Greek Cypriot refugees suffered in 1974, Cyprus remained a democracy, and it rebuilt itself into the prosperous European Union state of today. Cyprus did not wallow in self-pity, as so many other nations have in similar circumstances. Cyprus did not flaunt its refugees or make them a spectacle for political propaganda purposes.

Former Foreign Minister Iacovou once told me a powerful anecdote in this regard. He said that, in the wake of the war, one Cypriot official wrote a memo to President Makarios urging that the refugees be kept in camps with only the most basic of amenities; this, he said, would create a weight on the conscience of the world and would boost the Greek Cypriot case in the court of international opinion.

But President Makarios was too wise for that. He wrote back that the worst thing Cypriots could do is to compromise the well-being of our own people for the sake of propaganda; that, he said, would only heap indignity upon their suffering and would be a derogation of the government's obligation to its own. In almost no time, Cypriot resourcefulness had achieved the rehabilitation of the refugees, and refugee neighborhoods were virtually indistinguishable from others, at least to others. Cypriots long for the healing of their nation, but they lead creative and productive lives every single day.

Thanks to Makarios's far-sightedness, Cyprus is today a dynamic and thriving European state, instead of a benighted third-world backwater. Would that the Palestinians had had a

Makarios of their own, instead of an Arafat. How different the Palestinian refugee situation might be today.

I stand second to nobody in my desire to see a peaceful settlement of the Cyprus crisis and to see the breathtaking island of Cyprus fully re-united under one government. I also deeply respect the efforts my good friend Kofi Annan made toward that end. But first and foremost I am a democrat—and I mean, in this case, with a lower-case "d". On April 24, 2004, the Greek Cypriot people democratically rose up—virtually with one voice—and rejected the Annan Plan. The international community must give that decision its fullest respect, and it must draw the obvious implications. When 75% of the people say "no," the fault lies with the drafters, not the people.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this summer, I was honored with the Mordechai Frizis Award. This honor is named after the Jewish Greek hero from Chalkis who was the first high-ranking Greek military officer to give his life in defense of freedom against the Axis powers in 1940.

As the only survivor of the Holocaust ever elected to Congress, I saw first-hand the atrocities of that time. I lost my family, and my wife lost most of her family. Many others lost their lives and their families.

Over 55 million people died in World War II, including Mordechai Frizis. Had brave and selfless people like Frizis not fought against the evils of the Hitler regime and even been willing to die for our freedom, the outcome could have been even worse. We are much in the debt of the Morodohai Frizis's of the world.

The indigenous Jewish communities of Greece represent the longest continuous Jewish presence in Europe. Tragically, these communities were almost completely destroyed during the Holocaust. Greece lost at least 81 percent of its Jewish population during the Holocaust. 60,000 to 70,000 Greek Jews perished, most of them at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Only 8,000 to 10,000 Greek Jews survived. The number would have been even smaller, had it not been for the Greek people who were unwilling to cooperate with German plans for their deportation, and Greek resistance groups who battled the Axis occupiers to save Greece and the Jews living there.

The Frizis Award contains the soil of Greece, the U.S., and Israel. All three countries have deep meaning in my life, and the connection between the three is even more important. I thank the Greek, and of course the Cypriot, people for their great contributions not only to the world, but also to me personally, and to my wife. We and the entire world are better for these contributions.

The fact that Mordechai Frizis was the first Greek killed in the first successful battle against the fascists in World War II has an overpowering symbolism for the world and for me personally. The onslaught of the fascists was, in fact, an assault on the very values that Hellenic and Jewish civilizations represent, particularly the joint commitment of our cultures to ethics and honest rational discourse. As we face a war on terrorism today, once again Jewish and Hellenic values are at the barricades facing the barbarians and their totalitarian, violent ideology. Once again, it is our fierce commitment to what we know is right, our conviction that the barbarous cannot be allowed to win, and our courage that will see us through.

Mordechai Frizis was a man—a Greek, a Jew, and, from what I've read, a brilliant and

highly capable officer. But circumstances have endowed him with so much more, with near-mythical status. For Mordechai Frizis is a metaphor for all that Greeks and Jews have suffered, all that we have triumphed, all the values that we would not compromise and that we have insisted that the civilized world embrace.

That is why I was deeply honored and grateful to receive the Frizis award, and that is one reason why the Hellenic world has my enduring friendship and support.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating our Greek and Cypriot friends as we all remember the October 1st Cypriot Independence Day and Greece's "Oxi Day" on October 29.

TRIBUTE TO LAURA PRYOR

HON. GREG WALDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 29, 2006

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable lady and tremendous public servant who hails from the quaint town of Condon, Oregon—Laura Pryor. For as long as I can remember, folks in Gilliam County have fondly referred to her as "Judge Pryor" as she is the chief steward of the county. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me as we thank Judge Pryor for the countless contributions she has made to Gilliam County and the state of Oregon during 19 years of public service.

Born and raised in San Diego County, Judge Pryor rode her horse to school up until the second grade. Her childhood instilled in her a love for the rural countryside and rural way of life. Over 30 years ago, as her California community began to develop and be paved, Laura decided to move her four children to Oregon to avoid the urban sprawl in preference for a country setting where neighbors still offer their help without thinking about it. After briefly serving at the Oregon Department of Economic Development, she met a third-generation wheat farmer, married him and moved to his hometown of Condon, population 750. Within two years, the governor appointed her to fill a vacant seat on the county commission. Gilliam County is one of seven in Oregon where the top official is titled "county judge," and has responsibility over some judicial functions in addition to chairing the county commission. Laura has been ably steering Gilliam County from the judge's seat for 19 years.

Mr. Speaker, Gilliam County is in the heart of the Columbia Plateau where the economy is largely agrarian and the towns are quietly settled away from the main thoroughfares. With a population of approximately 1,900, the county encompasses nearly 1.6 square miles for every person. The county courthouse sits 250 miles away from the state capital in Salem, and nearly 3,000 miles from our nation's capital here in Washington, D.C. The region needs an effective and assertive voice to be heard, and Judge Pryor has delivered just that the past two decades.

It is through Laura's first-hand experiences in life and in representing rural Oregonians that she became such a strong advocate for farmers, ranchers, and small business owners