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**The Lonely Path of Integrity
Spyridon, Archbishop of America (1996-1999)**

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Tachydromos (Montreal Fortnightly Newspaper)
February 26, 1999

Spyridon's Visit to Greece a Great Success

by Justine Frangouli

The first official visit of Archbishop Spyridon of America to Greece, where he was cordially welcomed both by the country's political leadership and by the Opposition, can be described as a great success.

The Primate of the Church of America met with the President of the Republic, Costis Stephanopoulos; the Prime Minister, Costas Simitis; the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Theodoros Pangalos; the Minister of National Defense, Akis Tsochatzopoulos; the Minister of Education, Gerasimos Arsenis; the then Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs, George Papandreou; the President of Parliament, Apostolos Kaklamanis; and other members of the PASOK government.

Archbishop Spyridon also had meetings with the leaders of the Opposition parties, with the exception of Costas Karamanlis, reported to be ill.

In his luggage Archbishop Spyridon brought back with him quite a lot: closer ties forged with the homeland, a promise of exchanges involving the youth and Theology Schools, and a commitment that he would accept the contribution of Greece to mapping out a long-term policy on Greek education in America. He also came back with the air of a leader accepted by the Greek government and perhaps with the feeling that Archbishop Christodoulos, Primate of the Church of Greece, had latent designs against him. In fact, Christodoulos had decided to strictly observe the protocol, avoiding to concelebrate with him at the Athens Cathedral and confining himself to a mere exchange of gifts and compliments.

While the Primate of the Church in America should have been therefore enjoying the conquests made in Greece, upon his return to America, he became the target for a new round of attacks on himself and on the Patriarch by leading members of the church pressure group known as GOAL (Greek Orthodox American Leaders), who also happen to sit on various administrative boards of the Archdiocese itself.

In a letter signed by its leading members George Chimples, John Collis and Peter Dion, GOAL savagely attacked Archbishop Spyridon's person and actions and sought the financial support from members of the "Leadership 100" organization in order to continue to wage war against the Archbishop, with the war cry "From Bartholomew to Spyridon to Chaos."

However, the "chaotic" coincidence is that the aforementioned GOAL leaders also serve on the executive board of "Leadership 100", an endowment fund for the Archdiocese National Ministries. This important fund recently became a separate administrative entity, in spite of the fact that it operates within the Archdiocese and is part of the whole Archdiocesan structure.

Sharp criticism of the recent letter has come from Archdiocesan Council President John Catsimatidis, who, in spite of his repeated appeals for a dialogue with the dissidents, suddenly finds himself faced with the absurd letter by members belonging to a church pressure group, who

turn for financial aid to members of a church institution on whose administrative board, ironically enough, they themselves serve.

Mr Catsimatidis called upon the three GOAL leaders to resign from "Leadership 100" since they are serving interests that are in conflict with their role as members of such church institution.

However, the same people and in particular active GOAL leader Peter Dion, in their capacity as Archons of the Order of St Andrew (an honorary title bestowed by the Patriarchate on certain distinguished members of the Church), are now circulating an open letter among all fellow-Archons called upon to sign a libel against Archbishop Spyridon and demand his immediate removal from the Archiepiscopal throne "for the good of the Church and her future in America."

A reply was given to this letter by the Commander of the Order of St Andrew, Archon Anthony Lymberakis who noted that the dignity of Archon entails loyalty to the Patriarch and the Archbishop of America and certainly not a relentless war on church institutions with the final objective of achieving an autocephalous status for the Church in America.

In these circumstances, Lymberakis called upon those who disagree with the charter of the Archons' organization (whose purpose is to promote relations with the Patriarchate) to resign.

It is now clear as day that GOAL's few members are pulling the strings in a pitiless war waged against the Archbishop whose head they want on a plate, here and now.

All are now aware that the war conducted by these determined individuals is being brought towards the interior of the Church, so that the Archdiocese of America can profoundly feel the dissident waves.

The troubling question that arises among ordinary churchgoers is: should power games be allowed to constantly divert the Archdiocese mechanisms from the Church's real task? Is it really worth it?

[Translated from Greek]

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