



Second District Councilman
Anthony Ambridge
and Michael Dukakis

THE GOLDEN AGE

Baltimore's Greeks consider it a miracle they've got a presidential candidate.

But will they support Michael Dukakis? Who knows.

Greeks are known to give with their hearts—and vote with their heads.

SUNDAY MORNING AT Preston Street and Maryland Avenue begins when Father Constantine Monios sounds the call to worship. He stands at the altar of the Cathedral of the Annunciation and chants the morning prayers in a sonorous, melodic voice, switching back and forth between English and liturgical Greek, a language that evolved sometime after Constantine the Great.

As the parishioners trickle in, each picks up a long, slender, white candle and drops a dollar or two into the basket presided over by a doughty representative of the Women's Guild, which devotes its energies and finances to the preservation and beautification of the Cathedral. Before heading for a pew, parishioners kiss the icon—a portrait of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary—and the Bible beside it. Then each lights the candle from one of the tapers embedded in a trough of sand.

Monios meanwhile has begun his prayers in earnest. Among his supplications for the travelers, the sick, the suffering, and the captive, he also asks the congregation "to pray for our country, the president, and all those in public service." He doesn't name names, but they know who he's talking about.

"We Greeks always pray for our leaders, our emperors," says Monios, a well-spoken, politic man. "Because we know it will go better for us if he has the Lord's blessing. We would pray for the president if he were an atheist or a Jew."

Politics and politicians always have been very dear to the civic-minded Greeks. They consider themselves the standard bearers of

the principle of democracy as it was invented by their ancestors, although most Greeks in America are more immediately descended from a royalist government. And the deeply family-oriented Greeks have a decidedly possessive attitude toward their leaders, *especially* if he's one of their own.

Greeks in Baltimore now find themselves in a situation they never dreamed possible. Michael Dukakis, a fellow Greek American, one of the smallest ethnic groups in the country—about two million nationally and twenty-six thousand in Maryland—is making a serious bid for the White House.

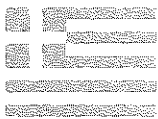
Oh, they've had their share of winners. In fact, as an immigrant group, Greeks have accomplished in a single generation what has taken other groups two or three.

"Well, they're a quick and alert people as a general proposition," says Senator Paul Sarbanes, one of the Greek community's success stories. "And they have a lot of drive. My father ran his own restaurant, and the whole family worked in the kitchen. I was waiting tables. But we had volumes of Plato and Aristotle on the bookshelves, too."

In the minds of most Greeks, however, the odds of a Greek American making it to the White House are so phenomenal they are still marveling over it.

"Not since Telly Savalas has it been so chic to be Greek," says Councilman Tony Ambridge whose family came from the same region, Smyrna, as Dukakis's family. Many Baltimore Greeks seem to hail from the same island or village as Dukakis's forebears. It's a favorite pastime—tracing one's ancestral connection to the Duke.

"Italians had La Guardia and Cuomo, but Greeks haven't had that yet," says Ted



By CONSTANCE ADLER



Venetoulis, former Baltimore County executive and gubernatorial candidate, during a brief respite after the Democratic Convention, which he covered for WBAL-TV (Channel 11). "We've had Sarbanes and me, but we've never had a Greek leap into the national picture with celebrity status. It will mobilize Greeks as never before."

In truth, Greeks in Baltimore are only just beginning to sort out their feelings about Dukakis. And they are not as united as one might expect.

GREEKS TRADITIONALLY VOTED as New Deal Democrats. As they prospered, they divided between Democrats and Republicans nationally. (At the state level they are, like the rest of Maryland, mostly Democrats.) Greeks who still consider themselves Democrats (including many recent immigrants) have no problem; they will vote as they always have. Greek Republicans are having a tougher time. Some say they'll stick with their party, and besides it's



Doug McDonough

POLITELY POLITIC: Father Constantine Monios, whose parish, the Cathedral of the Annunciation, is the mother church of the Greek Orthodox community and the oldest Orthodox parish in Baltimore.

THE GOLDEN AGE

irresponsible to vote along ethnic lines. Others say it's time to show their loyalty to a fellow Greek, and they'll worry about his policies later.

"Oh, Greeks are not monolithic politically," says Pete Marudas, Sarbanes's former chief administrative assistant and now Mayor Kurt Schmoke's executive assistant. "They span every economic category now. They don't vote en masse. Except maybe in Highlandtown."

Dr. Anne Barone (nee Argyrou) is one of several physicians in the anti-Dukakis group. Barone left Baltimore in 1964 for Chicago, where she earned a doctorate and a medical degree. She returned in 1984 to become head of Emergency Medicine at St. Agnes Hospital. The daughter of immigrants, she is fluent in Greek and wants her son to learn it so he will feel a connection to his ancestry. She considers herself a real Greek, but she's not voting for Dukakis.

"Well, he's not very good for doctors," she explains. "He's done some funny things in Massachusetts to socialize medicine . . . You can't get a license to earn a living without complying with Medicare assignments. That sort of thing is usually voluntary, but he's made it compulsory. It's unconstitutional!"

If these words sound like a betrayal, Barone is unconcerned. "Oh, I've betrayed my background in so many ways, it doesn't matter any more," she says. By this she means that a Greek woman who earns advanced professional degrees sets herself apart from the Greek community. "Greek society is a very male chauvinist thing. Girls are not valued or encouraged the way boys are. You're encouraged to get an education, but only up to a point. Then you hit puberty, and they start to get scared and try to get you married off so you'll be someone else's problem. It's a shame because there are so many intelligent Greek women."

Leaving the bosom of Greek life in Baltimore—Highlandtown, sometimes known as "Greektown"—is yet another form of betrayal. It is the stronghold of the ethnic identity in Baltimore. Most recent immigrants live there, most homes are Greek-speaking, most of the daily commerce is conducted in Greek, and the inhabitants work conscientiously to preserve the customs and the ties to the motherland. Not even Little Italy, where the most Italian usually heard is the occasional colloquial imprecation, bears such a strong ethnic resemblance to the ancestral home.

"Our people in Highlandtown go to Greece like some people go to Ocean City," says Monios. "They bypass Athens and all the touristy stuff and go straight to the villages where their families live," he says from the cool reaches of his downtown parish, which consists largely of affluent second- and third-generation Greeks who have moved out of the city to the county.

"Yes, Highlandtown—it's all ours, but it's another world."

IT'S HIGH SEASON in Highlandtown for sojourning to Greece, and Nitsa Morekas is having a rough day. She operates a travel agency out of Kentrikon, the Eastern Avenue gift shop that she and her cousin John run with the help of her sister Eva Vatakis. Nitsa screams rapid-fire Greek into the telephone while Eva minds the displays of jewelry, books, and videos.

"That was for one of my customers," Nitsa explains when she hangs up. "They really put me through the wringer. If they went to any other travel agent, a non-Greek, they'd take whatever he gave them. But with me—I'm like family—they want everything a certain way. And they're not afraid to ask."

Dimitrios Avgerinos, the chef and co-owner of the nearby Acropolis restaurant, is fixing "a little bit of everything" for lunch, as he puts it. That includes fried calamari, ziti, octopus, beans in tomato sauce, lamb chops, and roast lamb. This is all preceded by a salad with large chunks of feta cheese. A table intended for six people is soon laden with a feast intended for three. "I told him we weren't big eaters," says Eva. "But he won't listen."

People in Highlandtown go to Greece like some people go to Ocean City.

Dimitrios brings out the rice pudding and baklava himself. "It's not fattening," he assures Eva. She appears highly skeptical. Dimitrios gets to the heart of what's on everybody's mind. "Nineteen years I am in America. And I always vote Democrat," he says, slapping the tabletop emphatically with the flat of his hand. "Mikey Dukakis is all right by me."

Nitsa reports that her brother-in-law feels differently. "He says he doesn't agree with Dukakis's policies—he loves Reagan—and so he's not going to vote for him," she says, plopping a ladle full of rice onto her plate. "I said to him, 'Don't say that! We're proud of Dukakis.'"

"But look, it's not right to vote for him just because he's Greek," says Eva.

"Honey, when people stick together, something good happens," her sister replies and holds up a clenched fist to illustrate her point. "The Jews in this country stick together, and that is why they are the most powerful group. Greeks are much too competitive. Especially with each other."

"That's why we have four coffee shops on one block," Eva says.

"Greeks cannot work together," Nitsa

goes on. "They're natural winners, but they're egotistical. They've got to have the last word. A Greek cannot compromise with another Greek. With a non-Greek, yes, but not a fellow Greek. Am I right?"

Her sister nods solemnly. There is a consensus among Greeks that Jewish-Americans have a stronger lobby. Greeks were as passionate on the issue of Cyprus as Jews have always been on Israel—thousands of Greeks marched on Washington when the island was invaded in 1974.

"Cyprus is still the litmus test for what politicians they will support," says Venetoulis. "The first question always is, 'How are you on Cyprus?' And the answer better be positive."

But Cyprus is still more of an emotional issue for Greeks than a clear-sighted political one. The sudden ground swell of activism over the invasion didn't remain strong for more mundane problems like water management. The simple explanation that the Greek-American lobby isn't as strong as the Jewish-American lobby because Jews have greater numbers in America does not satisfy the young, recently arrived Greeks. They're worried that they can't agree with each other on at least a few basic issues.

In Baltimore the contrast is played out geographically. Most Jewish families, in their migration out Park Heights Avenue, have remained together in a close community. Whereas Highlandtown, although still a solid core, where more Greek is probably heard than Hebrew or Yiddish in Pikesville, does not represent a majority of the community. A good two-thirds of it has scattered into Towson, Cockeysville, Homeland, and other suburbs. And as the community merges with the mainstream, Greeks are looking wildly about them trying to see what's being lost.

THE CENTER OF Greek-American life is undeniably the church. Highlandtown's social, cultural, and spiritual center is Saint Nicholas, which was established on Ponca Street in 1954 with a \$5,000 gift and a piece of property from the mother church, the Annunciation. Saint Nicholas's parish has about five hundred families and is called "the walking church" because most of the parishioners live within walking distance. By contrast the Annunciation has about fourteen hundred families, most of whom drive to church. But the Greek language school at the Annunciation is not as well-attended. Most of the children in Saint Nicholas's language school already come from Greek-speaking homes.

The third parish is Saint Demetrios, led by Father Ernie Arambiges, Tony Ambridge's uncle. The parish was founded in 1969 and built a beautiful new church in Cub Hill in 1984. Its 430 families are



LUNCH MATES: Nitsa Morekas (left), Dimitrios Avgerinos, and Eva Vatakis share a laugh at the Acropolis, the Eastern Avenue restaurant where patrons wrangle political points.

young—the median age is 47—and more English is heard there than Greek.

The rectory office at Saint Nicholas is abuzz. Takis Tzimos, the president of the church council, and Susan Alexandratos are shouting alternately in English and Greek at each other over plans for a party. John Voxakis, the vice president of the council, has just learned that he can't rent the *Bay Lady* for a church fund-raiser and run wheels of chance on it because gambling isn't allowed on the waterways. He says he knows of another organization that managed to get a permit to gamble on the water.

"I think there's some kind of discrimination going on, if you get my drift," he says. "If we had a Greek mayor, it'd be a different story."

Susan wonders aloud if, when Dukakis is elected, things will change. John responds by jackknifing out of his seat and emitting a loud wet noise through pursed lips.

"Bffffuuuuu!" it sounds like. "Dukakis! He's not even Greek!"

"Yeah, the fake Greek," says Susan.

"Of course, he's Greek!" says the indignant Takis.

"He's not Greek *Orthodox*. He's of Greek *heritage*," Susan adds.

"Yeah, that's like Agnew," John continues, his voice tinged with contempt. "He didn't even admit he was Greek until he needed money from the Greek millionaires

in New York. His real name is Anagnostopoulos. He changed it, and then when he needed money he went around saying, 'I'm Greek! I'm Greek!' I mean, he's not like Sarbanes."

"Oh, he's Orthodox," Susan agrees. "I see Sarbanes in the Annunciation all the time. And he speaks Greek. With an American accent, maybe, but he knows it."

"I'm backing Dukakis because he did a good job in Massachusetts," John concludes. "Not because he's Greek. That has nothing to do with it. And besides, a vote for Dukakis is not a vote for Bush."

The issue of whether Dukakis is Greek enough plays on Greeks' minds in a very strange fashion. For instance, his standing with the Orthodox church comes up often. That he was not married in the Orthodox church makes him unable to participate in the sacraments. He does attend an Orthodox church in Boston—he doesn't receive communion.

Archbishop Iakovos, the primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America, has stated that Dukakis is in good standing with the church, which satisfies just about everybody.

"He's as Greek as Greek can be," says Monios.

But his non-Orthodox marriage to a Jewish woman has become a political issue, and often gets used as a way of discrediting him.

When James Jatras, a member of the State Republican Committee and a Greek Orthodox Church layman, was a guest on the Les Kinsolving radio program on WFBR recently, he said Dukakis excommunicated himself by marrying outside the Orthodox Church, implying that made his candidacy a fraud. The worker bees on Kinsolving's show attempted to invite comment from the religious leaders in the Baltimore Greek community. They did not meet with much success.

"Ooooooh, don't get me started on that because I'm hot," says Monios in a rare burst of temper. "A young lady from the radio station called me about half an hour before the show aired and asked me if I wanted to call in. I said, 'Miss, do you know George Bush's religious affiliation?' She said, 'Well, I think he's some kind of Protestant.' Do you realize that the whole world knows what Dukakis's religion is, and no one knows what Bush's is? I've asked dozens of people and no one knows!"

"I was going to call up the show and say something, but you know how Kinsolving gets. He goes on a tirade, and you can't talk to him."

Father George Kalpaxis, the pastor of Saint Nicholas Church, squats on the steps of the sanctuary—a hot iron and a brown paper bag between his feet. He is taking up the candle wax stains from the carpeting. "We

THE GOLDEN AGE

must make the church clean," he explains unbending his tall, spare frame. "The bishop is coming."

The bishop is expected later in the evening from the archdiocese in New York for the wedding of Malama Braimos and Manuel Burdusi, who is a seminarian (according to Greek orthodoxy, priests can be married before they are ordained). Kalpaxis has many details to attend to aside from the carpeting. But he finds time to comment on Dukakis's unorthodox marriage. The 71-year-old priest maintains a philosophical outlook on the subject. "We cannot condemn a man for his religion. That is a very personal thing. We leave it up to God," he says simply.

BISHOP SILAS MAKES it to the church on time for the evening wedding. Saint Nicholas's polished pews and walls of flattened Byzantine images—the saints and the mother of Christ look down on the assembly with dark, almond-shaped eyes and long noses—are illuminated by three huge chandeliers. And one bright white light for the video camcorder.

The bride, a sailing vision in white satin and tulle, stands half a foot above her grin visaged father who propels her down the aisle to the altar where the priests from all three parishes and the bishop await her. Even with one priest attending, most survivors of the lengthy Greek wedding ceremony agree, "When you get married in the Greek church, you know something serious is happening to you."

At the reception a few young priests and seminarians lean against the bar and reminisce about earlier days when you could be assured of at least a few belly dancers at every Greek event. "Yeah, they used to have them at church socials," says one. "I saw a woman bounce a sword off her stomach once! Then it dawned on them this was supposed to be a Christian gathering. So, they stopped it."

The band, Zephyros (the name in classic Greek mythology is a mild wind that brings good fortune), chooses this moment to begin the first dance. Roughly translated, the song is called "Oh, How Beautiful Is the Bride." For most of the reception, Zephyros plays traditional Greek songs such as the rousing line dance "Tsamikos," but by the end of the party the band gets around to playing "Once, Twice, Three Times a Lady." For now, the spotlight picks out Manny and Molly who step gracefully around the dance floor, as the guests throw money on the couple. Bills flutter gently around them, and a shower of coins rolls across the room.

One of the guests explains that the bridesmaids will cover the wedding night bed with money and sugared almonds to ensure a

prosperous and fruitful life for the newlyweds. It is also customary to place money in the baby's hand at a baptism. "They also throw money on the floor of a new car, as a general blessing. Babies and new cars. It works for both."

More than eating and dancing, Greeks love to argue. And Dukakis inevitably comes up as a hot topic over the wedding feast. One table of about eight people can't reach a consensus on whether Greeks are conservative or liberal.

"Whatever makes them richer, that's what Greeks are," quips one guest.

"The first generation is conservative, and the second generation is liberal," goes another jocular answer from an older man. His son, who is a general assignment reporter for a news station in Springfield, Massachusetts, attempts a slightly more serious answer to the Dukakis question: "Well, I have some doubts about him because him he's a little too liberal, but, yeah, I'll vote for him. I mean, I'm aware of the deficit, but I feel bad when I do a negative story on Dukakis. I feel like I'm turning in a brother."

"Oh, I wouldn't vote for him just because he's Greek," his father says. "I was embarrassed by Agnew."

"So, do you think he's an opportunist?" the son asks. "One question I keep hearing is, 'Hey, Michael Dukakis, how long have you been Greek?'"

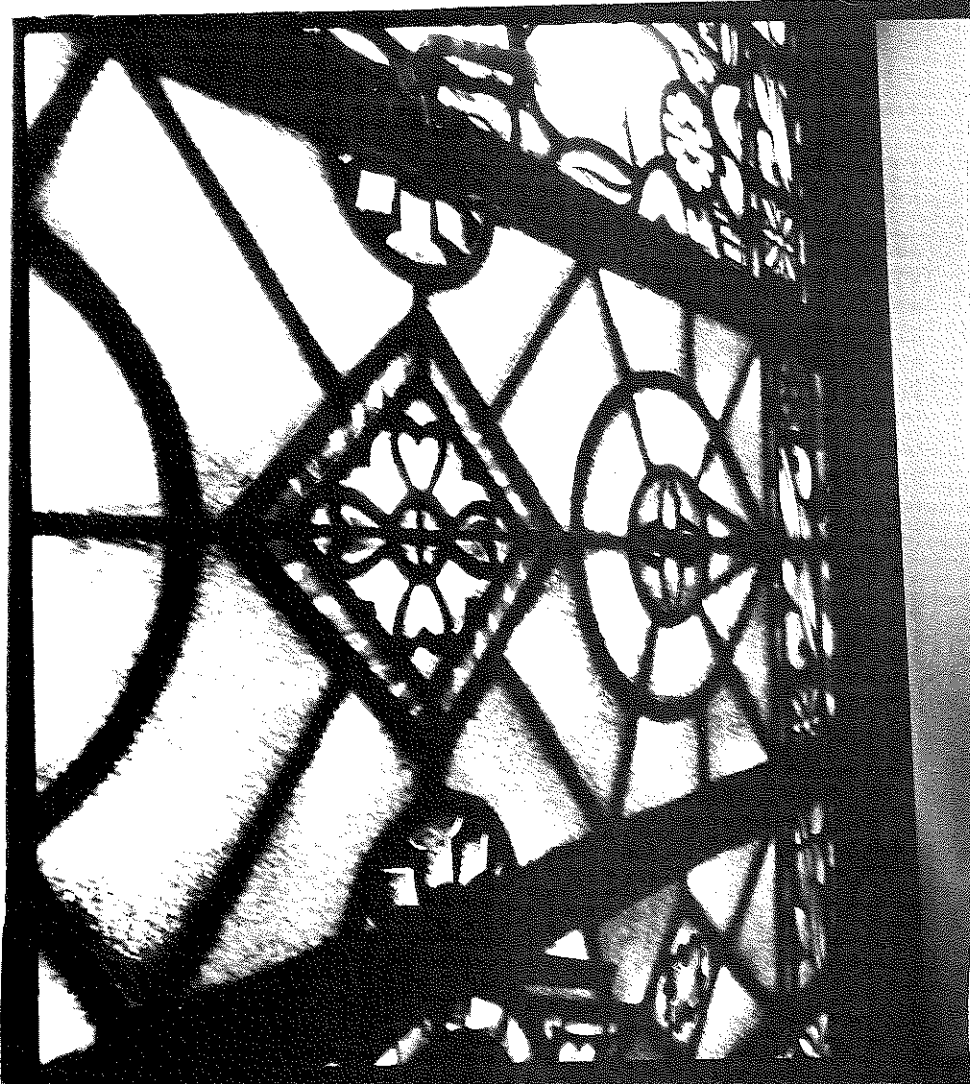
"Absolutely he's an opportunist!" his father shoots back. "Like every politician."

"I hear he joined AHEPA [American Hellenic Education Progressive Association, a Greek American fraternal organization] just two weeks before he announced he was running for president," someone adds.

"Don't bad-mouth him," cries a young seminarian. "He's an honest man. At least he's not some former CIA guy."

At times Greeks almost sound grateful to have George Bush running against Dukakis because it makes decisions easier. They don't have to resolve questions about his orthodoxy or his policies. With Bush there, the moderate and assimilated Greeks can go on saying, "I'm not voting for him because he's Greek. I'm voting for him because this former CIA, Reagan yes-man makes me nervous."

IMMIGRANT PARISH: Father George Kalpaxis in Highlandtown's Saint Nicholas Church



GREEKS ARE AWARE of their fragmentary nature, and when they talk about it, they begin with the ancient squabbles between Athens and Sparta. They also point out that Greece is composed of islands, each with its own costumes, customs, dialect, its own stubborn way of doing things. And over the millenia there has been little mixing among those insular cultures. All they had in common was the church, even when they began settling in the New World.

In Highlandtown, until recently, a mixed marriage meant a union between two people whose families came from different villages in Greece.

Political infighting follows Greeks wherever they go. In the 1920s, the Annunciation parish, which began in 1906 at a Homewood and Chase Street building before moving to Preston Street, had a little schism of its own. A new parish broke off from the mother church and established itself in what is now the Kennedy Institute across from the Johns Hopkins Hospital. This split occurred after an argument about whether Greece should have a prime minister or continue with the king. The rebel par-

ish wanted to stick with a royalist government, and the Annunciation parish favored parliamentary rule. The two reunited in 1929 when Greece itself settled for both a king and a prime minister, like England. But for a while these new immigrants in Baltimore were fully prepared to live apart from each other in the New World.

This active attachment to motherland politics can be attributed to the fact that

The church is examining its role in the community. Is its job to be a spiritual leader or to preserve ethnicity?

when Greeks first arrived, they had little intention of staying. Unlike other ethnic groups that came to America in the late nineteenth century, Greeks were not fleeing religious persecution or famine. Village life was not exactly rich, but they didn't see any reason to leave permanently. The eldest sons were sent over to make money so they could return to Greece and provide a dowry for their sisters. The brothers could not get married until the sisters were squared away, and arranged marriages were standard practice.

Greeks became more assimilated in the American way of life after World War II and increasingly distanced from events in Greece until the Turks invaded Cyprus in 1974 and forced Greek Cypriots to leave their homes and settle in the south. The Turks, who outnumbered the Greeks ten to one militarily at the time, continue to occupy the agriculturally rich north.

The Cyprus event revealed yet another division in the Greek-American community. It began when the American-supported, allegedly CIA-backed military party came to power in Greece in 1967. The Colonels, as the junta was known, sought to unify Greece by claiming Cyprus, which had only recently obtained independence from Britain. The attempted takeover provoked the Turks to invade.

Many Greek Americans supported the junta, which had a decidedly "pro-church" slant to its propaganda, because the Colonels were widely perceived as the orderly antidote to the invidious Communist threat. Greek Americans who were old enough to remember the atrocities committed by Communist forces during the civil war that broke out in Greece after World War II, saw the right wing Colonels as a godsend. Even today some Greeks in Baltimore say they much prefer the Colonels over the present Socialist government in Greece.

But Greek Americans who actually lived

in Greece during the reign of the Colonels and then came to America to attend American colleges, were appalled that America would support a military dictatorship.

The junta finally fell in 1974 amid reports by Amnesty International of torture and other atrocities after a student uprising that followed the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and left several students dead.

"There was a feeling that the Greek Americans would be on the front line, affecting public opinion about the Colonels and pressuring Turkey through the American government to get off Cyprus," says Lambis Platsis, who with his brother, Constantine, owns Mykonos Restaurant in Towson. "But they were passive. There was a feeling that they had forgotten the motherland."

Lambis was a member of the Maryland Committee for Democracy in Greece, a small group in Baltimore that demonstrated against the Colonels without much support from Baltimore Greeks—except for Pete Marudas, who was a hero of these young, educated, recently arrived Greeks. Marudas, a reporter for *The Sun* at the time, protested the actions of the Colonels in the editorial pages of the paper.

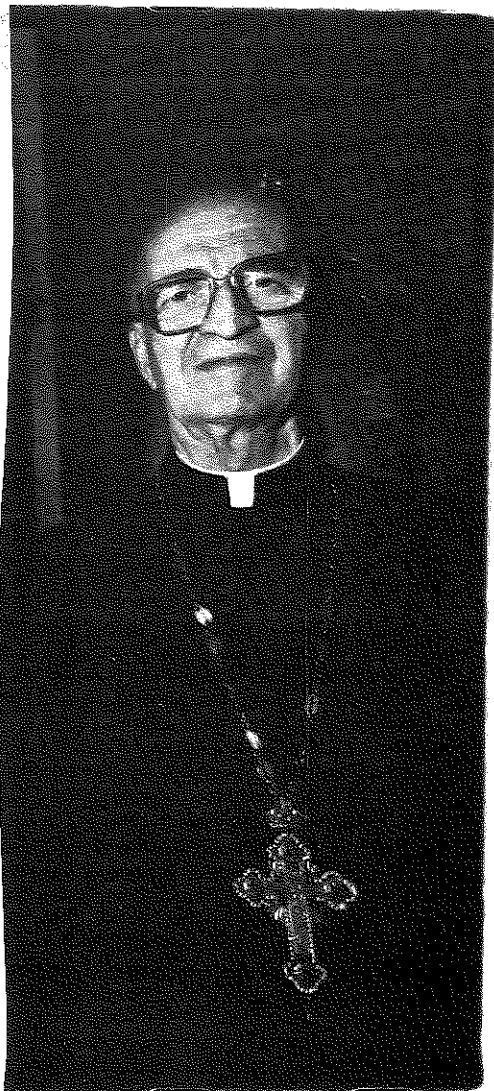
"Pete was the first, and that's important," Lambis points out. "Sarbanes spoke against them later, but Pete was the first. For that we were very grateful."

MARIA CAVACOS, whose grandfather mortgaged his house to help pay for the Cathedral of the Annunciation, lived in Greece during the reign of the Colonels. "It was terrible," she says. "I remember them standing on the corner with guns." Cavacos, an artist, returned to a Baltimore in the mid '70s that had not changed since she left.

Indeed, many say that it hasn't changed much since the 1920s, and that it bears almost no resemblance to present-day Greece, which has evolved as all the other touristy European nations have. The young Greeks in Greece apparently do not know the traditional dances as the young Baltimore Greeks do. Nor are they as involved in the church as their American contemporaries.

Arranged marriages are not common in the American Greek community anymore, but they are not unheard of, either. In Highlandtown there are women in their 70s and 80s who never bothered to learn English, and they continue to grow their own mint and grapes in the backyard.

The relatively small size of Baltimore's Greek community is another reason it has managed to hold onto its customs for so long. By comparison, Chicago's hundred thousand Greeks (the city is called the third largest Greek city after Athens and Saloni-



ka) are much more scattered and assimilated than Baltimore's fifteen thousand.

The reason for this phenomenon varies according to how charitable the speaker. Monios, for example, says the Greek community has kept its innocence of an earlier time, has preserved the delicate values that were alive in the 1920s.

"Highlandtown resembles the rural villages in Greece because that's where the first immigrants came from," says Tom Marudas, a senior aide to former Mayor William Donald Schaefer and now a real estate developer with Sterling Homes. "So the rural customs became Greek-American customs. The Athenian wedding ceremony is very different from the wedding ceremony you see in Highlandtown."

A more jaundiced view of the Baltimore Greek community is that it's stuck in a time warp—that the Greeks here are provincial and cling to obsolete remnants of a culture out of nostalgia; they still live like immigrants—insular, clannish.

The entrance of Greeks such as Ted Venetoulis, Tony Ambridge, Paul Sarbanes, and Michael Dukakis into active political life probably comes as part of a move away from the insular life in the ethnic ghetto. Tom Marudas contends, however, that Greeks were born to be out there in the civic arena.

"Being in the restaurant business, Greeks were always coming in contact with the public—lots of people," he says. "In one day you could have a hundred people come through your restaurant, and you would have discussions with them. First about baseball and then politics."

"Greeks are actually very extroverted. Always reaching out to become a part of where they are. That's why they're so civically involved."

The introduction of English into the liturgy in recent years is another sign of change in the Baltimore community. The reaction to this change is mixed. Cavacos sits barefoot and cross-legged on the floor of her small Fells Point row house. She wears a blue jumpsuit, and her hair is swept up into a ponytail on top of her head.

"Hearing the English in the liturgy drives me berserk! I might as well go to a Protestant church," she says. "See, it's all woven together, the church, the smells, the food, the dance, the music. I love being Greek," she says rocking back and hugging her knees. "I don't think I'd like to be anything else."

Indeed the church is deeply meshed with the ethnic experience—there is almost no separating the two. The church holds Greek language classes, not liturgical Greek—that you learn simply by paying attention in church. The church also has taken on the task of teaching traditional village dances and hosting festivals where children learn how to make traditional Greek cuisine.

THE GOLDEN AGE

While about 85 percent of the marriages in the Annunciation parish are mixed (the figure is much less at Saint Nicholas), Monios points out that most of those mixed marriages take place in the Orthodox church and often the non-Orthodox half of the marriages decide to become confirmed in the Greek Orthodox religion.

"Lots of our kids end up marrying Roman Catholics," says Monios. "There are

At times Greeks almost sound grateful to have George Bush running against Dukakis because it makes decisions easier.

a lot of Italians in Baltimore. And they just seem to like each other."

So numbers are growing in the Greek Orthodox church, but in the process the culture is becoming diluted. And the church is being forced to examine its role in the community. Is its job to be a spiritual leader only? Or is its job also to preserve ethnicity as it did through five hundred years of Turkish occupation during which time Greeks were forbidden to worship or attend school?

This dilemma is played out significantly on a national level by Archbishop Iakovos, who has not yet made a pronouncement about Dukakis's stand on abortion. Some acutely watchful Greeks feel that the Archbishop is promoting ethnicity and avoiding the abortion issue so he doesn't have to come down hard on Dukakis as then-Archbishop (now Cardinal) O'Connor did with Geraldine Ferraro and New York Governor Mario Cuomo.

"The archbishop was Dukakis's priest when he was a little boy. He watched him grow up. If Ferraro and her archbishop were part of the same small ethnic group as Dukakis and his archbishop, perhaps he would have supported her more," Monios candidly remarks.

GREEK AMERICANS first became involved in politics in the '30s, as individual businessmen who supported candidates that seemed to have their interests at heart. Simply knowing someone in office was considered an honor, and Greeks did not have the numbers required to form a special interest group with clout.

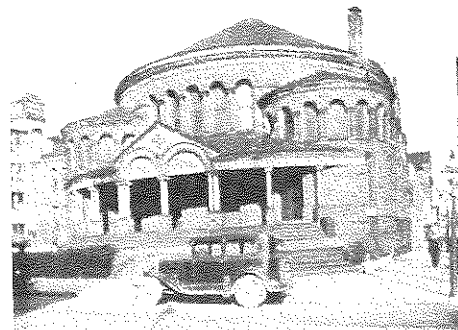
This traditional mixing of business and politics is still alive in Baltimore, as evidenced by the fund-raiser for Dukakis at the Omni Hotel in the spring. It was hosted by Second District Councilman Tony Ambridge, Tom Marudas, and Andy Papaminas, asset manager of the bankrupt Old

Continued on page 106



ROYAL WELCOME: An auspicious gathering at Penn Station in 1946 on the arrival of King Paul I of Greece, in uniform at extreme right, holding gloves. Archbishop Athenagoras attended. To his left is Mayor Theodore McKeldin.

DOWNTOWN CATHEDRAL: The Annunciation about 1935





HONOR GUARD: This group of prominent Greek Americans in Baltimore met for a luncheon honoring Archbishop Alexander, the bearded man at the head of the table. Second and third to his left are Spiro Agnew's parents, Theodore and Margie Anagnostopoulos.

THE GOLDEN AGE

Continued from page 79.

Court Savings and Loan. H and S Bakery President John Paterakis, the paterfamilias of the Greek community, was also a prominent fixture at the fund-raiser, which raised \$165,000 for the Dukakis campaign.

Paterakis is a reluctant "godfather." He shuns the term as much as he shuns interviews with reporters—he was resolutely unavailable for this story. "He's the least ostentatious guy I know," says Ambridge. But Paterakis, whether he likes it or not, is a focal point for the Greek community, largely because he's a generous donor to many causes, not all of them political. He contributed to building a new church for St. Demetrios, even though it's not his parish.

"Johnny finds himself being approached by everyone who is running for office and wants help," says Venetoulis. "I think he rather enjoys it. He limits it, but he probably gives Greek Americans priority." And Paterakis certainly has rallied for fellow Greek Michael Dukakis even though the candidate's policies are a little more liberal than a businessman such as Paterakis probably would like. The humble baker was a principal reason for the success of the fund-raiser.

"See, he buys tickets for everything," explains Ambridge. "So when it comes time for him to sell some of his own, he calls them back, and how can they refuse him?" That's the way politics and Greeks in Baltimore always have worked—deposits and withdrawals in the favor bank. "Every Greek in the metropolitan area who has a problem calls me," says Ambridge. "Greeks can be very demanding."

This is simply a tradition. Greeks expect fellow Greeks in office to treat them like members of the family, not strangers. (One armchair political theorist says, only half-joking, that when Dukakis becomes president, Greek Americans will go to him asking that he find them a job or a wife for their son.)



By the same token, when a Greek-American politician strays, Greek Americans take it especially hard. Spiro Agnew is regarded



PATERFAMILIAS: H & S Bakery President John Paterakis exchanges smiles with Ted Venetoulis at the 1984 dedication of the Annunciation Orthodox Center.

as a particularly painful blemish. When Greeks refer to him, they do so in a tight-lipped manner usually reserved for the blackest sheep of the family. The feeling seems to be that they wish it simply hadn't happened because when one Greek American embarrasses himself, he embarrasses the entire community.

If Dukakis is supposed to be the redemption for Agnew's sins, Greeks aren't admitting it.

"Oh, we're over that, that Agnew thing," Venetoulis maintains vigorously. "When I ran in '74, during Watergate, that existed. There was a desire to wipe out the stigma of Agnew with me. We weren't about to let it happen again."

Still, Agnew got the support of Greeks in Baltimore, including Paterakis, who hosted a fund-raiser for him at his home.

"Who knew?" says Venetoulis. "We were all close to Agnew. He was the head of the Loch Raven PTA! And Johnny didn't know either. He thought it was great that Agnew was a Republican, but it was enough that he was also Greek."

Greeks in Baltimore took a while to move to the foreground politically. Agnew came on the scene in 1962 as Baltimore County Executive, followed about a decade later by Ted Venetoulis. After one term, Venetoulis ran for governor and was decimated—his own county abandoned him completely. (He now owns *San Francisco Magazine*.)

The kinder assessment of Venetoulis is that he moved too fast. The less kind say he tried to make a national career on the backs of the citizens of Baltimore County. An even greater sin in the eyes of the Greek community is the claim that he didn't return

phone calls from fellow Greeks.

"I was criticized for not having a Greek assistant," Venetoulis says. "I said, 'Why do I need a Greek assistant? I'm Greek. You got the boss. You want more?'"

Two who have never made tactical blunders with the Greek community are the Marudas brothers. Tom spent eight years as an aide to Schaefer when he was mayor. Pete worked for Sarbanes for sixteen years, and many say the smooth-talking, well-connected Marudas is what made the solid, sound, but less-than-charismatic Sarbanes palatable to the public. Marudas's appointment to Schmoke's staff is hailed as one of the mayor's savviest moves because of Marudas's connections both up the power scale to Sarbanes and Capitol Hill and outward to the community, where it is said he can get just about anything done. His Rolodex is considered priceless.

Sarbanes's run for the House of Delegates in 1966 was actually the first time that Greek Americans saw a political pioneer, one of their own, someone they could wholeheartedly admire, move from the background to the foreground. The excruciatingly moral and excruciatingly careful Sarbanes is loved by all. Why? Because he's *sincere*, they say. That he's a fellow Greek just makes it easier—and more enjoyable—to love him. He is the good son, the white sheep, who makes his family proud.

Sarbanes is even loved by the Greeks who have plenty of reasons to dislike him. He's liberal, he's married to a non-Greek, he's thoroughly Americanized in his manner and education—all the things that make Greek Americans wonder about Dukakis just slide right off Sarbanes.

GREEK POLITICIANS in general tend to differ from Greek-American voters. They're more liberal than prosperous business people with assets to protect. And the politicians have a stodgy intellectualism, a civic idealism, a . . . well, a *blandness* that doesn't quite match up with the rich ethnicity of the group. Humorist Mark Russell touched on this when he called Dukakis "Zorba the Clerk."

"When Greek Americans get into politics they have to appeal to non-Greeks," says Pete Marudas. "There are no Greek-American political clubs. And there just aren't enough Greeks to get elected solely on that. It isn't enough just to be Greek."

Sarbanes and Dukakis who have been close friends since their days in law school (they both attended Harvard) embody the American ideal for Greeks. They are both born of immigrant parents, and they have achieved dizzying heights. "When their mothers came here for a better life, how could they have imagined that a better life would produce a U.S. senator and a presidential candidate?" asks Monios.

But Sarbanes differs from Dukakis in that he always has maintained closer ties to the Greek community. He's a good churchgoer, and the Sarbaneses attend many of the

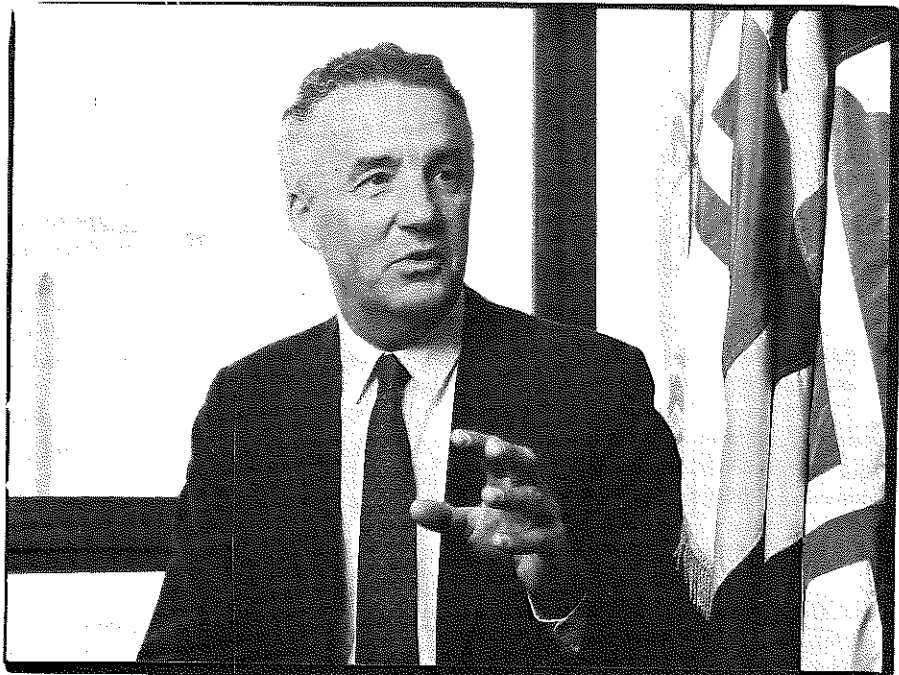
doing his Greek heritage, they would have doubts about his sincerity on many levels. They wouldn't support him *just because he's Greek*, but they wouldn't support him *if he weren't Greek enough*.

"Voting is not a rational exercise," Pete Marudas sums up succinctly. "It's also very emotional."

Consider for a moment that Greeks constantly seem to be juggling their emotional and rational sides. Greatly influenced by a Mediterranean temperament, Greeks are both passionate and possessive. But they also have inherited an ancient cerebral tradition from the philosophers and mathematicians who founded Western civilization.

Greeks have an ability to think and feel at the same time, which makes them thoughtful about feelings and emotional about ideas. This ability is the source of a deep and abiding ambivalence, as well as a lot of noisy conversation.

The best illustration of Greek ambivalence is the story about the wealthy Greek businessman who always had voted Republican. When local boy Paul Sarbanes ran for the Senate, this businessman—filled with pride—contributed to his campaign. A strange thing occurred, however, when it came time to vote. As he was reaching for the Sarbanes lever, some powerful unseen



DELICATE BALANCE: Senator Paul Sarbanes is even loved by Greeks who have reason to dislike him.

Greek-American functions such as the Festival at Saint Nicholas. But Dukakis has caught on to the importance of keeping those ties alive.

Sarbanes maintains a delicate balance. For instance, if he were a scoundrel, Greeks would not support him. They'd feel guilty about it, certainly, but they are not jingoists. On the other hand, if he were a perfectly legitimate politician who seemed to be aban-

force guided his hand to the Republican candidate's lever.

It seems that as he was writing the check, his heart was in control of his hand. But when he voted, his level Republican head took over. As he left the voting booth, the businessman reflected that it's the beauty of this great American system that he can satisfy both his heart and his head. •

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Thanks
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