

SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE 400 YEARS  
FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE GREEK COLLEGE  
OF ST. ATHANASIOS IN ROME

(Rome, from 29 April to 2 May, 1977)

The well known Greek College of Rome opened its doors unofficially in November 1576 and officially on January 13, 1577 by the publication of the Pope's sealed announcement (Voula) "In Apostolicae Sedis Specula". Its founder was pope Gregory XIII. The aim of the foundation was to offer humanistic studies to Greek boys and also make them accept and propagate the Church Union term of Florence.

Four centuries have elapsed since then, and the history of this educational foundation has been identified with the activity of its pupils as it usually occurs in such cases. Modern Greek literature, modern Greek philosophy, the history of the Church and of politics, the history of ideas in general and of Education, will always present gaps and imperfection unless they dedicate substantial chapters to the historical presence of eminent Greeks educated in the Greek College of Rome. It is enough for one to think only of Leo Allatius, Theophilus Corydaleus, Peter Arcoudios, John Cottounios, Leonard Philaras, Alexander Mavrogordatos, Neophytus Rodinos, George Scoufos, John Patousas, in order that he may weigh and evaluate the contribution of this Foundation (through the said persons) to literature, philosophy, diplomacy, authorship and the publishing and educational activity of that time.

Naturally the modern science of history has already given up the idealistic interpretation of the past. Facts are examined uniformly and without any tendency aiming at beautifying them. Concretely when the Greek College was founded it reflected the Anti-reformation spirit of the 16th century with regard to the relations between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. And the crises in these relations have left deep traces in the story of the foundation and of its pupils.

The organisers of the scientific symposium faced in exceptional peace and calmness the research and evaluation of the two historical sides: so much the positive offer as the negative results too. Particularly, the soul of this symposium, archimandrite Olivier Raquez of the order of Benedictines, who has for years been the worthy director of the Greek College, organised the manifestations to the last detail and afforded the opportunity for the development of instructively detailed views on subtle and delicate problems dealing with the historical past of the foundation.

The six introductory suggestions made at the siege of the Greek College (Via del Babuino 149) from April 29 to May 1 chiefly referred to the presence of the most numerous national groups made up of the pupils of the foundation. So at first the Greek pupils were dealt with, and then followed the Italian-Albanians, the Ukrainians and the White Russians (Ruthenes), the Melchites (Arabs of the Near East).

More specifically the first introductory suggestion was made by Mr. Vittorio Peri, "scrittore greco" of the Vatican library. The title of the suggestion: "Novità e inerzie storiche nelle origini del Collegio" covers the claims of the problem for the purposes and the perspectives of the College (cf. the same author's work: "Inizi e finalità ecumeniche del Collegio Greco in Roma" *Aevum* 44 (1970) 1-71). The suggester made use of documented data and factually expounded the religious presuppositions as well as the political repercussions especially after the battle of Lepanto (Nafpaktos) in 1571, which presuppositions and repercussions had been created in the capital of catholicism and had contributed to the foundation of the Greek College.

Then followed the introductory suggestion bearing the title: "Gli alunni italo-albanesi del Collegio" of the well known scholarly monk of the Badia Greca of Grottaferrata, father Marco Petta. The testimony offered about the extensive activities of the Italian-Albanian pupils of the College will undoubtedly constitute the fundamental knowledge to cover integral biographies of eminent persons in the areas of South Italy and Sicily. Father Petta examined successfully the total of these pupils right from the first one appearing in the College in the 16th century up to the recent seminarians in our 20th century. He thus reminded the symposium of the vivid presence, in this intellectual foundation of Rome, of a nation whose historic fate gets along accompanied with and shaped in common with the Greek nation in the lapse of so many years.

The third suggestion, bearing the title "Il contributo del Collegio alla formazione dei giovani Greci (1576-1700)" was due to Mr. Zacharias N. Tsirpanlis, regular professor of the faculty of philosophy in the University of Ioannina. Based on the existing sources (despite the gaps they present) efforts were made in this suggestion in order that the following three fundamental subjects on the history of the College might be elucidated: (a) What is the number of the pupils who were educated in the College? (b) What was their nationality or the locality they originated from? And (c) What were the activities they made after their graduating and leaving the College? Following the suggester the period of the first 125 years of the function of the College was the most fruitful and prolific. Statistical data certify that in those 125 years a total of 626 pupils attended the College. Of these 626 pupils 374 were Greeks coming from Crete, Chios, the Ionian Islands, Cyprus, the Cyclades, Athens, Epirus, Asia Minor, Thessaly etc. It was stressed, besides, that the problem of the pupils' religious convictions must always be co-examined in the spirit and in the frames of the epoch concerned, and not following today's criteria (cf. book by the same author: *The Macedonian Students of the Greek College of Rome and their Activity in Greece and in Italy (16th century—1650)*, Thessaloniki 1971).

Interesting aspects from the activity in the pastoral field of the Greek students were offered by the next introductory suggestion made by father Markos Phoscolos, a priest from Tenos and archivist of the catholic archbishopric of Tenos and Naxos. The suggestion bore the title: "Attività pastorale degli ex-alunni greci". The efforts for the translation, publication and propagation of patrology texts, catechism and other popularized works of Latin or also Greek literature, were particularly stressed.

The last two introductory suggestions referred to the Ruthene and Melchite students of the College. Father Dmytro Blažejovskij, O.S.B.M., spoke on the subject "Gli studenti ucraini e biancorussi del Collegio". Let it be noted that the suggester has dealt for years with the historical problem of what has become of the Ukrainian students of papal foundations (cf. his noteworthy book: *Ukrainian and Armenian Pontifical Seminaries of Lviv (1665-1784)*, Rome 1975). Especially about the Ruthene students of the Greek College father Blažejovskij gathered a great deal of documentation from the archives "de Propaganda Fide".

Monsignor Joseph-Marie Sauget, "scrittore orientale" of the Vatican Library spoke on the subject "Gli alunni melchiti del Collegio". He presented mainly the most important students who had attended this College and had occupied leading positions (such as: abbots, archbishops, patriarchs) in the Church of Melchites. The suggester's historical investigation was even extended to our days.

The concluding completion of these suggestions was the speech delivered by today's Director of the College, father Olivier Raquez. Its title was: "Il Collegio Greco come testimonianza dell'interesse della Chiesa Romana per l'Oriente Cristiano". With profound knowledge of the historical problems the speaker offered a panorama of the College developing through the unfolding times, i.e. from the 16th to the 20th centuries. He recapitulated the conclusions

reached by the research until now; he marked off the principal stages of the life of the College and stressed particularly the new perspectives of the foundation since 1897, and afterwards, when pope Leo XIII reorganized the College and entrusted its administration to the Order of Benedictines. Moreover, the future course of the College was emphasized in accordance with the spirit of the second Vatican Synod (1963-64).

This scientific symposium was combined with solemn religious manifestations which occurred in the church of St. Athanasius, whose memory was celebrated in exceptional splendour (May 2). These manifestations, and the symposium as well, were attended by the illustrious cardinal Paul Philippe, president of the Holy Organisation for Eastern Churches, his sanctity the patriarch of the Melchites, Mr. Maximos V Hakim of Antioch, the Latin archbishop of Athens, Mr. Nicholas Phoscolos, the Bishop of Palermo, Mr. Giuseppe Perniciaro, the Bishop of Lungro, Mr. Giovanni Stamati, the exarch of the "Hellenic-rhythm" Christians of Greece, Mr. Anargyros Printezis, professors of the University of Rome, and others.

The texts of the suggestions and the prolific debates that followed will be gathered into a special volume. Summaries of some suggestions, and other relevant information as well, were published in dedication to the Greek College in the newspaper "Katholiki", n° of copy 1988, of May 17, 1977. The said volume will at any rate comprise also the co-operation of other special investigators about the College and its pupils, inasmuch as the aforementioned suggestions could not possibly cover all the themes constituting the historical development of the foundation. The wealth which the Greek College of Rome has left for science and for education in the 400 years of its life remains invaluable and constitutes an ambitious motive for investigators.

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