

*Calvin Zaun, P.O.W. Lt. Jeffrey Zaun's father, hanging the American flag outside his Cherry Hill, New Jersey, home.*

# THE WAR HITS HOME

*By MICHAEL and OLGA KARRAS*

**K**yrrios Apostolos eases himself into the weary armchair he has carefully draped with a bedsheet just in case he spills something. He doesn't want to soil the chair, and, in

fact, he tries to be as careful as he can be. He seats himself within easy reach of the small lamp table on which he sets down the demitasse of sweet, thick, steaming coffee he prepares for himself most

every evening, the same table where he rests his reading glasses when they're not in use and his gold-beaded *komboloi*. From this convenient position he can reach out and click the radio on and

off and turn its dial, which he does now to tune into the Sounds of Greece. Without the convenience of remote control, he infrequently turns on the television. The TV is used only when someone else, notably Michael, wants to watch it. Lately it has been on more often than it has been off. It is that time in the early evening, just after he has finished washing the few dishes he used for his light dinner and setting aside a much bigger portion for Michael, when Kyr' Apostolos relieves himself of his domestic obligations and thinks things over.

News of the war continues. Visions of a different time and a different place lately haunt Apostolos. Huddled among his schoolmates at the village square, he sings "I Ellada Pote Den Petheni" ("Greece Never Dies"). The words meant little to him then, but, as the years wore on, as the lanky youth grew into a strong and able-bodied man, as the man/soldier defended his country against Italian and German occupation, he began better to understand the meaning of these words and of others, too.

As the voice over the radio continues, he puts on his spectacles, unfolds the

newspaper, and scans the headlines, then his memory reawakens and he is returning home from war to learn that his brother Haralambos has not made it and that his father died of high fever just the night before. He puts the newspaper down, removes his glasses, sits forward to take a taste of his coffee, then leans back. He is walking quickly with his mother to catch a train, the one that will take them on the journey that will change their lives. In Athens he studies hard, to please his mother and his bachelor uncles, simple, kind, uneducated men who do what they can to encourage him to complete his education and make something of himself.

Apostolos did not let down his family. In time he becomes a caring and patient teacher, intent on instilling in his young students the proper values as well as the curiosity to question and to learn and the ability to think for themselves so that they would make the world a better place than the one he knew. Now the former elementary public school teacher, a pensioner, sits by himself in a living room that is almost gloomy, curtains drawn shut against the light that would otherwise filter through bay windows, mahogany furniture lusterless, slipcovers slightly disheveled and disco-

lored, and walls yellowing with age. He dusts often, and sweeps and vacuums, to keep things tidy. But a cloud of pain cannot be painted over or whisked away. It lingers day after day. The family portraits, quite a number of them, hang on the walls in clusters; they are the only visible reminders of a life that was. Iros absence is deeply felt. She knew how to make a home of a house! Now, he tries as best as he can to do what is right. He and Iro' were blessed with a daughter, Athena, who died without warming one crisp October afternoon five years before. Iro' and Athena, his beloved girls, are gone. Now only the men remain.

He sips his coffee, listens to the radio, and remembers the little house on Alkamenous and Aghiou Meletiou streets, the very one where Athena grew up, long before she left home to study and, then, remain in America, where chatty schoolboys and girls appeared in groups occasionally on Sunday afternoons to surprise their teacher and he treated to animated tales about the heroic deeds of characters mythological and real. Iro' passed around syrupy cakes and sugar cookies and glasses of milk. Kyr' Apostolos often sits and remembers the past, the horrendous past and the beautiful

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Bidding farewell: An Army Reserve medic with her young son.

past, and redefines his present obligations in life. Now that the radio and television and newspapers speak daily of the war, his obligations are that much greater. All sorts of anxieties take hold of him. Some fifty years after Apostolos himself first tasted combat, he is besieged by the fears that war awakens in man. He knows that if war had not broken out now it would have sooner or later. It was long overdue. It was inevitable.

He takes another sip of coffee and attempts now to relax. "*I Ellada Pote Den Petheni/Den Tein Skiazhi Fovera Kamia.*" There is no way that he is going to relax. Why, he wonders, are phrases rumbling through his head? Why is he muttering lines memorized long ago? What relation do they have to the present situation? What does Hellas have to do with America and the Middle East, the Gulf War? Why are hazy images of violence racing through his mind, causing him to experience emotions that are decades old. He gasps. Greece and the Greeks, Hellas and the Hellenes, were not afraid. They fought hard for their country so that Greece would never fall. And they were heroes. Why can't I let go of Michael? he asks himself, perhaps for the tenth or twelfth time this very same day.

He continues to make comparisons, between then and now, between the

Second World War, which he knew firsthand, and this one, the war that is being fought thousands of miles away in lands totally alien to Apostolos and for reasons not altogether clear to him. War is war, he concludes. It was ghastly then, it is ghastly now. What difference do better, faster, deadlier missiles make? War is hell, no matter where and for what reasons it is waged. He can't go beyond these thoughts. He's stuck.

The kitchen door swings open and the sound of footsteps echoes in the hallway. A young voice barks: "*Pappou*, where are you?" His sudden and thunderous appearance disorients Apostolos momentarily.

"Grandpa, grandpa."

"*Ti sinveni, paidi mou?* What's going on?" Apostolos asks with alarm.

"Pappou," he begins again. He tells his pappou, yet again, that he wants to join the army and, then, the forces fighting in the Gulf. He tells Apostolos that he and his friends discuss little else right now, so consumed are they by the war. The television images, in black-and-white and vivid color, are memorized by him and his pals and discussed at length every day after school has let out and homework has been completed, after dinner.

"But, you're only a child," Apostolos insists. "You haven't eaten dinner yet; I

have it ready for you inside." The only language that Apostolos speaks to his grandson is Greek, so that Michael will never lose touch with his background, especially now, when neither mother nor father is around to give him traditional values and a keen sense of his culture.

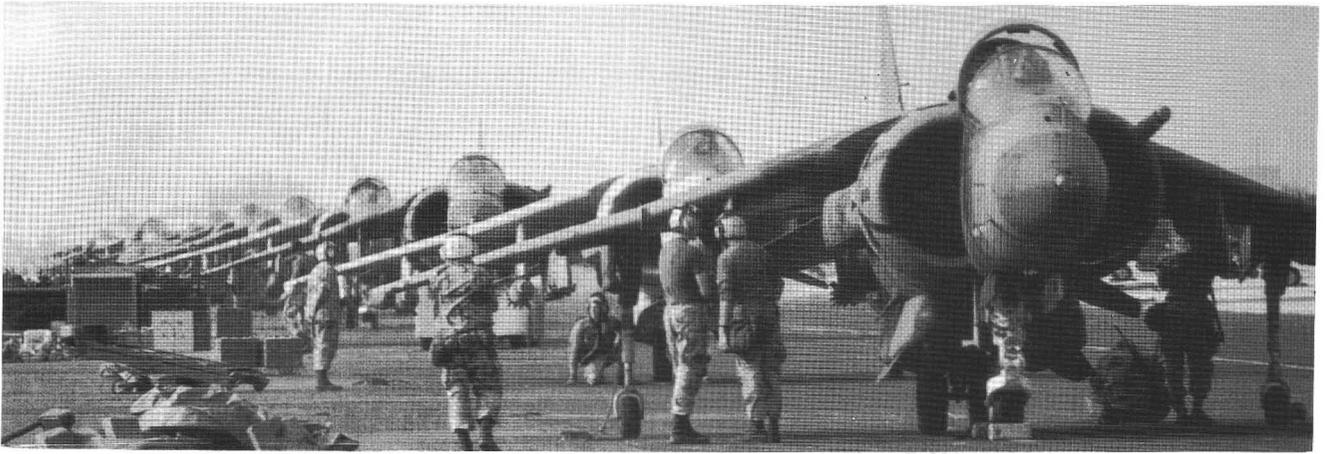
"I'm not hungry now. I'm not a child. You weren't any older than me when you fought."

"It was different then. I had no choice, my country was attacked. I had to defend my country. I had to ensure that democracy would not disappear." Apostolos presents this very argument every night ever since Michael confronted him with his desire to join the army. The same conversation every night and, still, Michael persists.

"I want to ensure democracy, too. America is right. Iraq is dead wrong." Michael is adamant.

"Yes, yes, *pedi mou*, but war is wrong." He shakes his head, affirming this obvious point of view.

"Tyranny is wrong, pappou. Don't you see? Yesterday we were arming Saddam with sophisticated weaponry, Germans helped him develop chemicals and gases. He used these against his enemy, Iran, and even against his own people. Now, the monster we had a part in creating is making trouble for every-



body. It's not a question of oil, pappou, it's a matter of democracy. Theirs and ours. You can understand that."

Apostolos remains silent for a few moments, studies the shaggy rug under his feet, and wonders when he last vacuumed, then quietly slips his feet into his slippers. He wiggles out of his chair, stands tall, as tall as his slightly bent frame will allow him, and holds up his hand as if to say, just a moment. He shuffles into the kitchen and, a moment later, the tap water is running. Standing by the sink, he drinks water from a special mug, one labeled "Seattle" with the Space Needle pictured, acquired during one of his many summer trips across the United States when he and Iro' came on their annual visits to America to see their daughter and her family. Those were the happy times. As he places the mug in the sink he hears the television go on in the other room. He reaches now for his tobacco and pipe. Stuffs the pipe and realizes that he isn't going to

escape the conversation.

"Tell me, pappou," Michael continues the moment his grandfather takes his first step out of the kitchen. "If you could do it over again, wouldn't you fight for your country?" More Scud missile attacks on Israel and Saudi Arabia today, the television informs them and the world at large. Patriots destroy all but one.

Grandpa grips the pipe tightly between his teeth and nods his head yes, without considering his response for a moment. He answers in the affirmative each time Michael asks this very question, which is so often that, at this point, it has become somewhat like a broken record. What should I tell him? Apostolos asks himself. I'm afraid you might die? No human being should experience war, especially you? You've suffered plenty already? What does an old man know? What do years of living teach you, especially about matters of the heart? About war? About love?

Michael is off again, to see his friends, he says, who are waiting for him now to discuss and analyze the news of the day.

"I'll see you later, pappou."

"Your dinner?"

"It can wait." He pats his grandfather's arm and then, on second thought, bends down to kiss him, and hurries off. Apostolos can't get over the fact that Michael has grown up so quickly. He is awfully proud of Michael, he knows, and more frightened for him that he would ever admit. So what is he supposed to do? Let the child go off to war and maybe never return? Tell the child that he, too, went off to war without considering how his parents felt?

The radio draws pappou's attention. Marinella sings "Pou Pane Ekina Ta Paidia/Pou Pethenan Yia 'Lefteria/Pou Pane?" Where are these kids, ready to die for freedom, going? Appropriately, this song is a "special

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**Αδελφοί ΤΟΜ και ΠΩΛ ΚΑΛΑΜΑΡΑΣ**

# THE GUNS OF DEFIANCE

G.C. Kiriakopoulos, author of the international *Ten Days Destiny-The Battle of Crete* has just completed the manuscript for his second book which deals with the four-year German occupation of Crete from 1941-1945.

The title is *The Guns of Defiance*.

The author, in referring to his second book, states excitedly that it is filled with pathos, adventure, heroism, and human drama. It tells of how the Germans sought to punish the Cretans for their resistance to the invader with wanton executions. In retaliation, the Cretan Resistance Movement was organized. The author describes the attack upon the German-held airfield at Iraklion by a British commando raiding force.

Throughout the plot of this documentary-history written in his own style like a novel (a style that brings history to life, as it did in his first book) - the author weaves the plot of an American youth whose father is murdered by the Gestapo, and of his attempts to exact justice and retribution against his father's executioner.

After many exciting episodes of espionage by British secret agents sent into Crete, and later by American OSS agents, the author takes us through the skirmishes against the Germans that evolved into bitter, hard-fought battles with the guerrillas. In the midst of all this is the American youth, still seeking the day of reckoning with the murderer. Finally, that confrontation occurs.

Toward the end, the author relates the heroic effort by

two British agents, working with Cretan guerillas, in successfully, kidnapping the German garrison commander from his headquarters and over the mountains to the southern coast for eventual evacuation to Egypt as a prisoner of war.

The book is filled with one adventure after another, plots that would make excellent scenarios for a screen film. All the details are based on true facts derived from diaries and first-person interviews of those who involved in these dramatic events in that era.

More recently, an article written by the author, titled Buchenwald, appeared in the December 1989 issue of Life Magazine. As a result several editors suggested that he expand the story into a full manuscript. That is now in the planning stage. This would represent the author's third book, bearing the working title of When Duty Whispers.

G.G. Kiriakopoulos, a dentist, is a professor on the Columbia University school of Dental and Oral Surgery faculty for 35 years. He lives with his wife, Virginia, and their daughter, Stephanie in Fort Lee N.J.

Besides practicing and teaching his profession, and writing articles and books on history as an avocation, he is active in community affairs, including membership on the board of directors of The American Red Cross, Northern Valley Chapter.

TOM SPELIOS

request", we are told, by some caller who is concerned, probably confused and anxious, too. Someone like Apostolos. He closes his eyes, envisions Marinella some twenty years ago. A beauty. In the midst of all his worries he has some time to spend daydreaming about Marinella, then he focuses on the faces of some of his former students, the special ones. They have children now, all grown up like Michael. Are these sons and daughters ready to go to war? Are they children or are they mature men and women? *Paidia?*

He puts down his pipe and rests his eyes on a large rectangular frame holding Michael's picture, taken five years ago when grandfather took grandson on a fishing trip, American-style. It was the year after pappou came to New York City, to the two-story wood-framed house on Crescent Street in Astoria, to care for his only grandchild whose parents had been struck down by a drunk driver. Michael had to be raised in America, the land of his birth. It was

only right, he had concluded. He couldn't take the child back to Greece. It wouldn't be right. He couldn't explain it any further or any better than that. Now he stares at the photograph and he speaks gently to Iro', the only woman he ever loved. He never stopped talking to her, not one day since she died more than twelve long years ago. He's finishing high school now, Iro', and then he's going to go to Harvard, he tells her. You and Athena would be so proud of him, Iro', but what should I tell him? School is important and war isn't?

Months of arguing have drained pappou. He went to war to preserve democracy. Isn't that the reason why Michael wants to go? Huddled among his classmates in the village square little Apostolaki sings, at the very top of his young lungs, "*I Ellada Pote Den Petheni*". Pappou turns off the radio, smooths down his full head of white hair, leans back in his chair, and sheds a solitary tear. Not for himself, not for Michael, but for all mankind. War, the greatest of evils, is again upon us.

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