

## THE LOCATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: OMILOS ERETON

*by Georgios Dolianitis*

First of all we would like to explain what OMILOS ERETON means.

OMILOS is the Greek word for "club" but also has a meaning of "cooperation between persons". ERETIS (ERETES- ERETON) is the ancient word for "rower". We can read the word in many ancient documents.

*Omilos Ereton* was established on the 18th of June 1885 by a team of 52 important persons of the Piraeus- and Athens society.

The idea of the founding came from Pavlos DAMALAS, a Chian who was living in Paris and who returned to Greece in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We can see how important DAMALAS was for the international (and not only Greek) rowing, knowing that there is still a yearly rowing race in Paris for a cup bearing his name.

The first president was the major of Piraeus Theodoros RETSINAS and among the members we can find A. ZAIMIS (who after some years became president of the Greek *Democracy*), Admiral KOUNTOURIOTIS, Colonel HATZIANESTIS, as well as MELETOPOULOS, KALIGAS, ORIGONIS, NEGRE-PONTES, SKOUZES, STAIS and others. Streets in the city of Pireaus bear their names.

*Omilos Ereton* is the oldest sports club in all countries of the Balkan. From 1888 the rowing activities were transferred to Kanari port of Piraeus, only some meters far from the ancient Greek port of Zea.

The experience of the members of *Omilos Ereton* made them the obvious choice to organize

the nautical sports of 1<sup>st</sup> Olympic Games in Athens and this was repeated with the Olympic Games of 1906.

Several years earlier, in 8 June 1886, *Omilos Ereton* organized the 1<sup>st</sup> rowing race in modern Greece and two years later, in 1888, it organized the 1<sup>st</sup> international rowing race, in which the crews of foreign battleships took part.

In 1894, *Omilos Ereton* organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Greek rowing championship.

In 1907 the 1<sup>st</sup> women rowing division was established in the club, and in 1908, came newly established regulations, which specified that women had to do their rowing in separate times from the men.

During the Olympic Games of 1928 in Amsterdam, a crew of *Omilos Ereton* took part and the boat (built in 1924) is still in the museum of the club.

In many later Olympic Games, rowers or crews from *Omilos Ereton* took part with, as the most important ones: K. KONTOMANOLIS (6<sup>th</sup> in the Olympic Games of Los Angeles at 1984), I. SIMPONIS (7<sup>th</sup> in the Olympic Games of Rome at 1960). These were the best positions of Greek rowing in the Olympic Games.

Also important was the participation of I. DIAKOUMAKOS – G. VENIERIS at the London Olympic Games of 1948 during the Greek civil war.

One of the most important things that started from *Omilos Ereton*, was the establishment, in 1998, of a special division for disabled persons.

This division was the first, (and up to this moment, the only one) in Greek rowing. With *Omilos Ereton's* rowers and experience, when F.I.S.A. in 2002 organized the first races for disabled persons (at Seville, Spain), Greece was present with a delegation and among the first seven countries, which signed the Seville protocol for this category of rowing.

In the 2003 World championship in Milan, Italy, *Omilos Ereton's* crew (AXAGORARIS, MONAHOS, GIUROUKIS, KITROMILIDIS, POLLAKIS) took the bronze medal for Greece in the race of coxed fours.

Keeping traditions, *Omilos Ereton* is still organizing a yearly rowing race by boats of "yole de mer"-type (for more than 70 years) over a distance of 8000 metres, between Glifada and

Piraeus. The race is called Marathonios at the memory of N. PAPAΚOSTAS (rower in 1906 and then general supervisor of the club for a period of more than 40 years). This race is called in Greece "the classical Marathonios rowing race" and there is now an idea to have the race transformed into an international race within the next few years.

Over the last 21 years, the President of *Omilos Ereton* is J. PΑPASPIROU (himself the former Mayor of Piraeus and a former Minister in the Greek government) with under him a council with eleven members.

The *Omilos Ereton* Building has been named a "historical memory building" according to a special law by the Greek Government.

