

THE FEAST OF THE NATIONAL ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER 28, 1940 AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, October 15 / 28, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the National Anniversary of October 28, 1940.

On this Feast the whole Church and that of Jerusalem commemorate our nation's sufferings; persecutions, exile, group executions and starvation, caused by the German and Italian atrocities, during their occupation in our country, in World War II (1940-1944). The Church prays for the repose of the souls of the fighters who devoted their lives in the defence of their country, and thanks God and the Most Holy Theotokos for their help in our regaining the precious gift of freedom.

This event was celebrated at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with a Doxology led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences the Archbishops of the Throne and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks. The chanting was delivered by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos, as the Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evaggelos Vlioras and members of the Greek Community.

The Service of Doxology was followed by the return at the Patriarchate Headquarters where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Evaggelos Vlioras,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Brethren in Christ

The great epic of 1940 is portrayed on today's anniversary of the "No" of 28th October, which was the answer to the provoking arrogance of the Fascist and Nazi forces of the German-Italian axis.

The 1940 "No" of Greece is a landmark of self-sacrifice for the defence of moral values, and love for the country, to safeguard the national independence and our territorial integrity. And this is so, because, undeniably, the heroic resistance against Hitler's armed forces was the victory of the spirit over material things, of freedom over slavery, of right against the unrighteousness of the modern civilization, of the barbarity, and finally, of Christ's light over the darkness of the devil, as Saint Paul wisely phrases: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

World War II and its consequences showed that the contemporary technologically advanced man "did not want to come to reason", meaning that he did not try to set himself free from his primitive beastly behaviour. "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25).

And we say this because the super-human fighting spirit of the Greeks against the axis was inspired by the faith in the Crucified and Resurrected Christ. Rightly it was then said that the 28th October epic was the miracle of the faith in God.

Our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, honouring, as it should, this historic event of "1940 No" and wholeheartedly participating in this victorious commemoration of freedom and of the steadfast resistance against the obnoxious occupational forces of Nazism, went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and

rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to the Trinitarian God, despite the restrictive measures of the Corona Virus plague.

Moreover, we prayed for the eternal repose of the souls of all our fathers and brothers who fought gloriously and suffered a martyr's death for their faith and country and for freedom.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, replying to the various challenges of the world and of our tested region of the Middle East, projects October 28 as an example of inspiration and hope, as Saint Paul's advice says: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage"(Galatians 5:1).

For all these, let us raise our glasses to a toast and exclaim:

Long live the 28th October 1940!

Long live the "NO"!

Long live Greece!

Long live the noble nation of the Rum Orthodox!

Long live our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!"

His Beatitude's address was followed by that of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evaggelos Vlioras, as per below:

"Your Beatitude,

Most Reverend Archbishops,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Children,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

National anniversaries are milestones, occasions for reflection, which in the course of time bring back to our minds the events that have forged the collective historical memory of Greeks everywhere.

In every historical period, there is a pole, a historical event that marks it, and it becomes a point of reference for all of us later. The struggle of 1940 is this landmark for the modern history of Hellenism, a central point of reference and a symbol for the whole Nation.

Therefore, at that time, as in any difficult time, there were many who surpassed themselves, "Or who came out of their skin", to use the phrase of Iakovos Kampanellis, and showed heroism, beyond what we call "duty". Ordinary, everyday people, who suddenly found themselves in the forefront of history, without asking to become heroes and yet received a "glorifying myrtle" responding, every single one of them, to the call, without fear, without hesitation, marking history and life in Greece and in Hellenism in general.

If life is measured more by the burning heart than by the duration, if the candle that shines brighter lasts the least, then we can all be proud of the mature life of those who sacrificed themselves in the icy mountains of Epirus, in the Fortresses of Macedonia, in the waters of the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, in the Middle East and throughout the resistance to the triple occupation of our country by the forces of darkness.

The Battle of Greece, which lasted a total of 216 days from the NO on October 28 until the fall of Crete on June 1, 1941, caused worldwide sensation and admiration, spreading hope and making the hearts of the peoples of occupied Europe, who lived the night of the occupation, to take courage. The magnitude of the sacrifice of the Greeks during World War II is easily

understood if we consider that Greece lost almost 10% of its population of 7.5 million.

It is, therefore, a special honour for the Consul General of Greece to address the Hellenism of the Holy Land and especially the young people on this special day of remembrance and pride.

Eighty years after this historic day we remember and pay tribute to the heroic heirs of the Homeland, to all those who fought the relentless beast of fascism and Nazism, to all those who made the supreme sacrifice, on the battlefields or in front of the firing squad, so that we can live free today.

To all those who with feelings of patriotism and self-denial, according to the play writer, "pushed the time for good towards peace and freedom. A freedom that seemed so wide to them".

We pay tribute to both the mothers and wives who endured while waiting, to the children who were orphaned or lost due to hunger and misery.

The Greek NO clearly and unequivocally demonstrated the deep historical conscience of the Greeks that dictated their refusal to forget their history and to live in compromise and submission.

In this national ordeal, the Sun of Righteousness did not forget Greece.

In this historical moment, as in any other nationally difficult circumstance, the dynamic participation of Hellenism anywhere in the world was valuable, for which Greece is proud and grateful.

The impact of the 1940 Struggle was shocking on Holy Land as well. More than 40 Greeks from Jerusalem voluntarily joined the Greek Armed Forces while two of them gave their lives for

Greece.

The Sailor Electrician Anestis Zografos was lost in the sinking of the Katsoni Submarine in Skiathos on September 14, 1943, while the Sailor Engineer Emmanuel Mykonos was killed during the impact of a missile of the Adria Destroyer in Kalymnos on October 22, 1943. The bones of the latter as well as 20 of his other comrades-in-arms, which were buried in a makeshift grave in Turkey, were transported to Greece in 1947 and deposited in the ossuary of the Monument to the Fallen of our Navy.

Today, as then, the venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, with their long and multifaceted contribution to the Holy Land and the highest pastoral work, remain, as a key point of reference, guardian of the moral and spiritual values of our Orthodox faith.

Our Patriarchate of Jerusalem testifies to the timelessness of the dynamic presence of the Greek and Orthodox tradition in the Middle East. Its high mind and struggles, under adverse conditions, until today, are for all of us an invaluable national capital but also a source of inspiration and encouragement.

For all of us, the national anniversary messages are only useful if they guide our steps today.

Especially nowadays, Greece is called upon to face a series of challenges to our national integrity, sovereignty and sovereign rights from Evros to the ends of the Aegean, to our land and sea borders and to our sea zones. The Armed Forces give every day the answer that befits modern arrogance, on land, sea and air.

Let me assure you that the common meaning we all derive from the NO of October 28, 1940, strengthens the strong will of the Greeks to maintain the freedom, independence and integrity of the homeland, knowing full well that the price of freedom is

always high, and that our country is blessed because there are always those who will willingly pay this price.

With these thoughts I call on all of us to exclaim:

Long live the 28th of October 1940!

Long live the Nation of the Greeks!"

This was followed by the Arabic translation of His Beatitude's address, by the Patriarchate's Representative in the Arabic M.M. Father Issa Mousleh, and finally, of the address of the Managing Director of the Patriarchal School of Zion, Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, as per below:

"Today we celebrate and recall in our memory one of the most beautiful, most brilliant, and most glorious moments of the Greek Nation. The thought of all of us today turns with sacred emotion, justified pride and infinite admiration to the great day of October 28, 1940. On that day, 80 years ago, the cannon sounded in the mountains of Northern Epirus and the whole of Greece paid its duty to the Homeland, a debt that is not transferable and everyone repays it by himself alone.

The Greek nation did not kneel in fear at that time. But like every time in history, it stood upright on its saddle and proved in the best way its love for the Homeland, a love without limits, since it puts the universality of its existence in the service of the Homeland. A love that reaches the contempt of death and the emergence of heroism that the modern world had not seen until then. And for this reason, the world looked closely and expressed its admiration in amazement, watching the triumphs of a small nation against a great power. And this is because everyone knew and knows that war, wants courage, it wants chests and arms, hearts that can bear the pain and endure the calamity. War wants strong people, who can rebuild from the beginning, everything that it [war] tore down and ruined in front of them. War wants determination, on the part of the fighters, in order to turn

it into a holocaust, so that they can sustain the liberty of all things they consider sacred and holy.

For as the poet says:

Here no one fears death but everyone longs to hear his name, riding on a horse, leaving on foot, here there is no place, neither for death nor for the fear of entering the tomb (Free translation, Poem by C. Palamas: The country that does not die).

October 28, 1940, is a new milestone in the history of our long-suffering Homeland, our thrice-glorious Greece. On that day, a new period of heroism and sacrifice of the Greek race began, for the preservation of its freedom and independence. With the protection of our Most Gracious Theotokos, the Greeks climbed like the eagles on the snow-covered, steep and inaccessible mountain peaks of northern Epirus, leaving friends and enemies open-mouthed.

Brilliant glory then crowned our Homeland, which despite the difficulties, continues to cover Greece with laurels.

Today, "the times are not waiting; we must take action". Clouds are gathering over our Homeland and some, just like the beasts of the Book of Revelation, have opened their mouths and gnash their teeth, wanting to frighten this small country by showing their great power; but they forgot or did not understand, that the Greeks, with their wonderful achievements, proved that in the fight for freedom, for the defence of altars and hearths, it is not the irons and the numbers that win, but the heart and the courage.

And as the poet says about the indestructible sprout of the Greeks:

I shall not be lost in the depths of the earth, I only stop for a while, I come back to life and make the nations rise! (Free translation, Poem by C. Palamas, Digenis and Charon).

Let us turn our thoughts at this time to all those who fought then, and sacrificed their lives for the freedom and the benefit of the Homeland, and offer them, as a minimum tribute, our admiration and gratitude, and assure them, that in the difficult times of our Homeland, their example will guide us and strengthen our will, so that we may become worthy successors of the bright and glorious struggles of the children of 1940 “.

The celebration was sealed with patriotic songs and our National Anthem by the Patriarchal School of Zion Students.

From Secretariat-General